Islam in World Politics

Edited by Nelly Lahoud and Anthony H. Johns

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

LONDON AND NEW YORK

Islam in World Politics

Over the past few decades, Islam has emerged as a political force on the international scene and *Islam in World Politics* analyses the factors leading to, and the implications of, this heightening of the profile of a religion.

In the political sphere, there is a wide range of emphases both in which an Islamic society might be realised, and the ways in which such a society might conduct its relations with the non-Muslim world. Within these different emphases are some radical tendencies. A cluster of fringe groups, broadly referred to as Islamists, have appropriated the rhetoric of Islam, applying it to a promised 'Islamic' reality to be realised once 'Islam is fully applied'.

The essays within *Islam in World Politics* are driven by the concern to address these issues. Areas that are covered include an examination of the challenge of Islamism to the Muslim world, the use of Islam as a political tool on the international scene, its contributions to the theory and practice of global finance, its role in gender discourse, and its articulations in the Indian sub-continent, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and the Arab world.

Nelly Lahoud completed her PhD in Islamic political thought at the Political Science Program, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University. In 2003 she was a post-doctoral researcher at St John's College, Cambridge and in 2004 she became Assistant Professor in Political Theory at Goucher College.

Professor Anthony H. Johns has written widely on Islam both in the classical tradition and its vernaculisation in Southeast Asia. He has taught and undertaken research in Cairo, Jerusalem, China, Toronto and Oxford. He is currently Emeritus Professor and Visiting Fellow at the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University.

Islam in World Politics

Edited by Nelly Lahoud and Anthony H. Johns

Contents

Contributors

Howard V. Brasted is Head of the School of Classics, History and Religion and Director of the South Asia Centre at the University of New England.

Anoushiravan Ehteshami is Professor of International Relations and Head of the School of Government and International Relations at the University of Durham. He was also Vice-President of the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies (BRISMES) (2000–03).

Greg Fealy is Research Fellow and Lecturer in Indonesian Politics in the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies and the Faculty of Asian Studies, Australian National University.

Shakira Hussein is Research Scholar at the School of Social Sciences, Australian National University.

Anthony H. Johns is Emeritus Professor and Visiting Fellow at the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University.

Nelly Lahoud is Assistant Professor at the Political Science and International Relations Department, Goucher College.

Roxanne D. Marcotte is Lecturer in Arabic and Islamic Studies, The School of History, Philosophy, Religion and Classics, University of Queensland.

Bill Maurer is Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of California, Irvine.

John R. Pottenger is Associate Professor of Political Science (Political Philosophy), University of Alabama in Huntsville.

Ahmad Shboul is Associate Professor, Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Sydney.

Preface

The essays in this volume discuss issues related to the emergence on the world stage of Islam as a political force. They are driven by concern to understand the factors leading to, and the implications of, this heightening of the political profile of a religion.

We invited academics with experience in some of the disciplines in which this political dimension is revealed to write on such issues. Their responses, which comprise the content of this book, go beyond both popular anti-Islamic polemic and pro-Islamic apologetic. They present and attempt to engage critically with some of the major events, movements and trends in the Islamic world over the past fifty years, and their effects on the international scene.

While addressed to an audience with an interest in Islamic Studies generally, and in disciplines such as Political Science and International Relations, the book is designed to be accessible to a general audience.

Given the breadth of the field, no such study can be exhaustive: inevitably, it is limited by constraints of book-length and the expertise available within any set timeframe. Thus we regret that it was not possible to include discussion on issues such as those current in Chechnya or Xinjiang, and even more on Iran. This is particularly regretted, as the editors are aware of how inadequately the Shi'ite tradition of Islam is represented in the literature.

There are further areas of the world of Islam that need attention and await further exploration. Among them is the influence of satellite television and internet websites, many of them run by Islamist groups that make available in English much of the material they present. There is also the role of Muslim communities in the West, whether those that are part of a general Muslim diaspora, or those that consist of Western converts to Islam. These comprise a range of Muslim attitudes, and have their share of Islamist groups and cells. Further, it has to be recognised that the Islamic world is constantly and rapidly evolving, and that it is hardly possible to keep abreast with the ensuing changes.

Within these limitations, we hope that the volume will show something of the nuances in relations within and between the world of Islam and beyond, and so contribute to a better understanding of the issues it presents.

Acknowledgements

Introduction

Over the past few decades, Islam has emerged with a political profile on the international scene. This heightened profile is due to various factors. Among them is the post 1973 realisation of the importance of the oil resources of the Muslim world, primarily in the Middle East, and more recently in the republics of Central Asia. This wealth has supported the establishment of Muslim commercial and civic organisations in Europe and North America, and, in a sense, given Islam a role and through OPEC a significant empowerment in the 'great game' of world politics and finance. This economic power has been accompanied by a desire among some Muslims for a greater 'authenticity' in the understanding and implementation of the social, moral, political and economic imperatives to be discovered in the Qur'an. Among other things, it has led to the appearance of Islamic Banking and Finance (IBF) and the articulation at a national and international level of political policies with an 'Islamic' edge.

Attempts to implement these concerns show great variety in scope and ways in which they are derived from and supported by the foundation texts of the religion, the Qur'an and Hadith, and the mix of pragmatism and perceived fidelity to their principles with which they are applied. In the economic field, for instance, the efforts of the IBF to develop an 'Islamic' interest-free banking system, pragmatism holds pride of place. Bill Maurer notes that in the operation of this body, 'questions of faith or belief take a back seat to questions of technique or instrumentality'.

In the political sphere, the spread is much broader. There is a wide range of emphases in both the ways in which an Islamic society might be realised and the ways in which such a society might conduct its relations with the non-Muslim world. Within these different emphases are some radical tendencies. A cluster of fringe groups, broadly referred to as Islamists, have appropriated the rhetoric of Islam, applying it to a promised 'Islamic' reality to be realised once 'Islam is fully applied'. They have put Islam's spiritual orientation at the service of an ideology that promotes their own agenda, for use as an instrument to right the wrongs they see everywhere in the world. Of these Islamist groups, a few have used their ideology to make of the Qur'an a divine injunction to use terror as a means of achieving political goals, in a way that perverts much of the moral, spiritual and cultural achievements of Islam in history.

These few have, unfortunately, dominated public perceptions of Islam in the West, largely because of the spectacular incidents they have master-minded, of which 9/11 is an example. Such groups have reduced Islam to an ideology with a specific recipe, one that draws on some elements of a corpus of goals and values, and eschews others. This ideology is given an 'Islamic' character by blending the rhetoric of its political goals with verses from the Qur'an and sayings of the Prophet. The resulting ideology is then said to be 'authentically Islamic' and as such is readily available for all to whom it makes an appeal. Its authority is enhanced because it enlists God in its cause, and the rhetoric in which it is packaged appears to give to its appeal the bless-ing of religion.

Islamism in its radical form inspires only a minority. But because many of those who embrace it are highly motivated and idealistic, it exerts a wide influence in many Muslim countries and across the globe, even among those who do not realise its implications or understand its principles. It colours, skews even, many outsiders' perceptions of what is happening in the Muslim world and of what Muslims are, and has generated a new order on the inter-national scene. As Anoushiravan Ehteshami observes, for some time now the international system has been subject to links 'between political Islam at home and the prevailing a-religious and hierarchical international system'.

It is by drawing on the resources of this a-religious international system of communication, e.g. media, satellite television and the internet, that Islamism has managed to create an identifiable international presence with the capacity to create and activate groups dedicated to it across the globe.

In Southeast Asia, for instance, as Greg Fealy observes, globalisation has allowed 'greater flows of information and people between the region and other parts of the Muslim world, especially the Middle East'. This is also dis-cernable in the case of Central Asia, where to a large degree 'the politics of the region is influenced by international Islamic movements and other geopoliti-cal forces', as John R. Pottenger notes.

The links between these groups are at times virtual and at times real. Looked at synoptically, they might appear as a homogenous entity that could be juxtaposed against 'the West', and so create the chimera of a clash of civil-isations. But the clash is more complex, and the prime victims are predominantly Muslims living in Muslim countries. As a result, there is now in both the Islamic world and the West a web of confused and confrontational identities. Muslims fearing other Muslims, non-Muslims fearing or suspi-cious of Muslims, Muslims suspicious and resentful of non-Muslims for suspecting that they are feared by them because they are Muslims, and even non-Muslims resentful of other non-Muslims for not being anti-Muslim enough, and so putting the non-Muslim world at risk.

In his exposition of perceptions of identity in South Asia, for instance, Howard V. Brasted highlights the tensions arising from the politicisation of religious affiliations to foment national conflicts, and the extent to which Islamists are contributing to these conflicts. Nevertheless, while noting that

Islam and Hinduism have had salient roles in the wars that India and Pakistan have fought, he observes that Muslims and Hindus have not yet behaved as 'tribal' groupings in Samuel Huntington's parlance. Rather, they have displayed such 'a mosaic of ethnic, regional and language variation that much of the conflict that has occurred at the level of belief and practice has been within civilizations than necessarily between them'.

While it may be said that the presence of political Islam in the Western-dominated international system is a destabilising factor, the same could be said about the impact of Western policies on the Islamic world. As Shakira Hussein notes in her chapter, the United States (US) led 'anti-Soviet campaign [in the 1980s] was conducted through the use of Islamist organisations who used the conflict to further their own agenda'. More recently, other instruments were employed, including the rather unusual one of an ostensible concern for women's welfare as a reason to defend the international order. As Hussein observes, this gendered reasoning has 'allowed the United States to claim the right to intervene in the case of Afghanistan'. But although abuse of and discrimination against women there still continues, now that the Western military mission of defeating the Taliban regime is finished, 'gender issues have once again become [merely] a domestic concern'.

Recognising the relevance of gender as a political tool, Islamists too have been formulating their own feminist agenda. As Roxanne D. Marcotte puts it, Islamists have used the failure of secular attempts to address gender inequalities as a way of highlighting the need to revert 'to traditional religious values that promise women greater security, rights, and respect in society, while integrating modern values associated with modernity'.

But are there any forces that are resisting the agencies of 'islamisation'? In his exposition of the role of Islam in the politics of the Arab world, Ahmad Shboul highlights the strong secular and progressive intellectual currents within Islam that are ignored in many Western analyses of the Middle East. Instead, it is the religious rhetoric, on the part of avowedly secular leaders as well as Islamists, that obscures the political reality of these currents.

It is against this background that this volume addresses some of the issues relevant to an understanding of Islam as a political force on the international scene at the present time. Over the past half-century, many events have highlighted the role of Islam as a cultural and a political force in international affairs. They have generated debates and discourses, many of which fall under polemics and apologetics. This volume aims to present a critical reading of some of the problems facing the Muslim world and the international order.

The following nine chapters include an examination of the challenge of Islamism to the Muslim world (Johns and Lahoud), the use of Islam as a political tool on the international scene (Ehteshami), its contribution to the theory and practice of global finance (Maurer), its role in gender discourse (Hussein; Marcotte) and its articulations in the Indian sub-continent (Brasted), Southeast Asia (Fealy), Central Asia (Pottenger) and the Arab world (Shboul).

A synopsis of each of the chapters is as follows:

Johns and Lahoud examine the rise of Islamism in a historical perspective, analyse it as a religio-political phenomenon and note the local and international factors that contributed to its development. They compare it to other religiously motivated political movements, and conclude by assessing the effectiveness of the responses deployed to meet it.

Ehteshami examines the schools of thought relating to Islamic activism on the international stage and Western responses to it. He explores the various social structures that make up the Islamic world with reference to the socio-economic factors that have shaped them, and shows how particular national–political situations may have international concomitants.

Maurer gives an account of current debates pertaining to the so-called 'Islamic' activities of Islamic Banking and Finance (IBF), its application of and fidelity to Islamic religious principles, and its increasing relevance to global finance. He also reflects on the impact of 9/11 on the change in attitudes to the IBF as an alternative form of financial management.

Marcotte explores the development of Islamist discourse on the role of women, drawing in particular on Egyptian discourse. She shows how Islam is being used as a negotiating tool for *more* and *greater* 'equality' for women in their respective societies, not an absolute equality of rights and status. Given the absence of a secular and inclusive political alternative, Islamism is developing as an effective instrument for the empowering of women, at least within limited parameters.

Hussein examines the development of gendered discourse pertaining to women in Islam as a subject of *international* significance following 9/11, and the subsequent '*re-domestication*' of the issue following the war on Afghanistan. Hussein draws on post-9/11 fieldwork she conducted in Pakistan and Afghan refugee camps to investigate the struggle of women's movements in that region against both local patriarchic and oppressive systems, and the international double-standard rhetoric on gender politics.

Brasted shows how religious allegiance has been politicised in the Indian sub-continent and how religious identities, Muslim and Hindu, are being deployed to serve national rivalries. His analyses of the contemporary conflict between India and Pakistan with reference to Bangladesh are set against a historical background of religious-based nationalism and cultural confrontations.

Pottenger outlines the complex role of Islam in the politics of Central Asia after the collapse of the Soviet Union, with special reference to the Republic of Uzbekistan. Pottenger shows that there are at least two levels of political Islam in Central Asia, a Soviet-style one that is deployed by the Government, and another by Islamist groups opposing State instrumentalities of authority. He observes that harsh measures seeking to control the appeal of Islamist groups have, up to the present, proved counter-productive.

Fealy gives an account of the emerging role of Islam in the politics of Indonesia and Malaysia, setting it in the context of the differences of the history, ethnic composition and constitutions of the two states. As elsewhere in the

Islamic world, there has been an intensification of religious belief and practice in both countries but expressed, at the political level, in different ways. In Malaysia, it is manifest in a more narrow and exclusivist application of Islam, and a dominant role for Islamist language in political discourse. In Indonesia, despite a far higher proportion of Muslims in a population many times greater than that of Malaysia, this has not occurred, nor has there been a significant increase in Islamist influence at government level.

Shboul shows how the religious rhetoric of Islam has managed to shape the politics of the Arab world, despite the existence of strong secular currents in the contemporary world as in the past. He draws attention to the historical background that saw illusive slogans such as 'applying the Shari'a' replace attempts to modernise Islamic jurisprudence. In that same spirit, Shboul contrasts the Islamists' seemingly uniform religious rhetoric against the political realities that saw them step by step adopt positions inconsistent with their principles to accommodate changing political circumstances.

1 The world of Islam and the challenge of Islamism

Anthony H. Johns and Nelly Lahoud

The world of Islam presents a vast panorama.[1] It is astonishing that its foundation texts, the Qur'an and Hadith, and the jurisprudential principles evolving from them should have resulted in such a variety of religious experience. They have appealed to and shaped mindsets of many kinds in different societies – urban, nomadic, mercantile, entrepreneurial, pastoral and agricultural; and generated a variety of civilisations and forms of religious and humanistic art and learning. In historical articulations they have generated various kinds of government, with varying distributions of power between clerical and secular authority.

Despite the closed corpus of the Qur'an and Hadith, these two foundation texts do not exhaust the subtleties and varieties of the religion as it was lived and the nuances of its realisation even during the time of the Prophet Muhammad. Thus any attempt to narrow the scope of the revelation to what is explicitly stated in them is likely to encounter difficulties and even contradictions. Muhammad, as the Qur'an emphasises, is not divine but human (Qur 3:144; 6:50; 7:188), and as such, his life and experiences were inevitably interactive with the changing circumstances of his time.

From within the Islamic tradition itself, then, individuals have brought different approaches to the understanding of the Islamic revelation. There are some for whom authority resides in the texts, and nothing but the texts. There are some who recognise development in doctrine as inherent in revelation itself; others are driven by a passion for primal authenticity of such an intense purity that it could never have existed. There are some who welcome a measure of diversity in the interpretation of doctrine, while others demand uniformity; some tolerate one, but pine for the other.

The resulting variety does not mean that there are many Islams, but there are a variety of modes and emphases in the realisation of the religion: modes and emphases that carry centuries of history and human experience. These range from the simplest level of orthopraxis to the spiritual wisdom of the mystics, from the gentle and feministic to the aggressively macho. As Akbar Ahmed shows in *Islam under Siege*, Islam is a faith of almost a billion persons, who share just as much and just as little with one another as everyone else on the planet.[2] Amid all this variety, for centuries Islam has displayed a marvellous

integrative capacity and tolerance in its responses to new cultural and social environments, and in the ways in which it functions as a principle of order.

Difficulties in epistemology

The extent and variety of the world's Muslim communities makes any summation of their features, let alone an understanding of their values, difficult to appreciate for the public at large and even for scholars of Islam (Muslim and non-Muslim alike) to keep track of. There are a number of reasons for this. One is the way Islam is presented in the media, which for the most part are concerned with spectacular and dramatic events. Inevitably, this gives the impression that violence and even militarism is a defining element in Islamic culture. Popular reportage, even when sympathetic, often offers no further sophistication than a division between moderate and fundamentalist Islam, fundamentalist at this level meaning little more than Muslims who are prepared to engage in terrorism.[3]

Generalisations are problematic even when using the simplest, and even unavoidable, terms of reference. It is common to speak of the Muslim world as if it were a self-defining category. But to say anything meaningful, one not only has to consider those countries where Muslims form a majority, such as Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Libya, Malaysia or Pakistan, but also countries where Muslims are a minority, such as China, India or Singapore. In one important and determining sense, what many of these regions have in common more than Islam is that formally or informally they have experienced colonial rule. Thus, the articulation of a concept such as 'Islam and the West' is often less about a culturally defining attribute and more about the terminology of one-time colonies vis-à-vis their former colonisers and their relations with them.

Another approach is to characterise Islam by area of practice. One such example is a broad brush distinction between Southeast Asian and Middle Eastern Islam. The Islam of Southeast Asia is widely held to be more tolerant, syncretic and gentler, than an imagined 'real' Islam of the Arab world. Yet a little observation will discern that there are varieties of practice in different parts of Southeast Asia, ranging from the radical to the gentle, and that the kinds of popular devotions and folk belief found there often, referred to as syncretic, are to be discovered in varying distributions everywhere in the Muslim world from Morocco to the Mindanao. This shows how even at a basic level, understanding of Islam is skewed by the imprecision of language.

Yet despite such an array of cultural expressions to be found in the Muslim world, there are current grandiose theories based on a narrow definition of the Islamic tradition and its cultural manifestations. Thus in Samuel Huntington's thesis that in the post-Cold War era 'local politics is the politics of ethnicity; global politics is the politics of civilisations', Islam figures as a single cultural political category. According to him, 'Islamic culture explains in large part the failure of democracy to emerge in much of the Muslim world'. While countries blessed with 'Western Christian heritages are making

progress toward economic development and democratic politics', the same, he notes, cannot be said about those with an Islamic heritage, and so 'the prospects in the Muslim republics are bleak'.[4] Huntington is echoed by other influential voices. In his introduction to *What Went Wrong? The Clash between Islam and Modernity in the Middle East*, Bernard Lewis advances a quasi-Huntingtonian explanation arguing that there is a clash between Islamic and Western cultures and a clash within Islam itself between modernist and revivalist forces. The influence of Huntington's and Lewis's ideas extend far beyond the academic community, notably to the circle of US foreign policy makers.[5]

Islamism in a historical context

From the perspective of post-11 September and post al-Qaeda (al-Qa'ida), it is difficult to appreciate the transformations that have been taking place in the religious consciousness and self-perception of Muslims from the 1960s. To be a Muslim at that time was largely an observance of the ritual law, which to the outside observer often did not go beyond observance of the daily prayer and the Fast of Ramadan. It is difficult to set a precise timescale to trace the developments that saw some currents within Islam become increasingly concerned to establish their presence in the world using Islam as their personal, cultural and political identification, and for some ultimately to deploy Islam as a tool to justify a militant political activism. This is generally the phenomenon of Islamism, to be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Cause and effect cannot lightly be conjoined. 'Islamism', however the protean significances of this word are understood, is heir to complex historical processes at the intellectual and socio-political levels. It is a product of clashes of interests, of colonialism – Islamic and Western, processes of decolonisation, and the emergence of contemporary authoritarian (Muslim) states supported by Western (largely, Anglo cum American cum French) neo-colonial powers.

The end of European colonialism has up to the present left the world with continuing problems of re-adjustment, due to the arbitrary borders, economic, ethnic and religious aberrations left by/imposed on the territories carved out by the former metropolitan powers. These were exacerbated in the course of the Cold War as Soviet Russia competed with their former colonial masters to maintain a privileged status and exercise economic and ideological control over their former possessions. The result has been a sometimes bumpy and erratic development in their political structures, the consequence of revolutions, coups and attempts at the re-drawing of borders.

The great zones of Muslim culture with which European powers had been engaged were the Ottomans (1281–1923), the Safavids (1501–1722) in Iran, the Mughals (1526–1857) in the Indian sub-continent,[6] and Southeast Asia. Of these, the most powerful in relation to Europe was the Ottoman, which for centuries ruled major areas of southern Europe, Greece and the Balkans,

together with the Fertile Crescent, the Hijaz and with it the Holy Places of Mecca and Madina, Egypt and North Africa.

The Mughal Empire, established in 1526, with its capital Delhi, dominated most of the Indian sub-continent for over two centuries. From the time of Aurangzeb (d. 1707), it disintegrated due to numerous factors, including internal divisions and the incursions of the English East India Company. In the wake of the Indian Mutiny in 1857, it was formally abolished. The severity of British reprisals against the mutineers resulted in many Muslim leaders leaving the sub-continent for the Holy Land and other regions of the Middle East. It set divisive forces at work among the Muslim and Hindu communities of the region, and marked the beginning of a long history of religious and political movements in the struggle against British rule. Ultimately, in 1947, it was to lead to partition, the creation of the nation states of India and Pakistan, and the eruption of the festering sore of Kashmir as a focus for Islamic–Hindu hostility.

The decline of the Ottoman Empire was slow. It was in part due to internal weakness, the upsurge of nationalism in its European provinces such as Greece and the Balkans, and the rapid expansion of the European powers. An internal assault came from the radical puritanical movement set in train by Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhab (1703–87) which became a religious ideology of tribal unification in north central Arabia, and in 1773 captured Riyad, making it its capital. An external challenge to Ottoman authority was Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt in 1798, which led to the installation of Muhammad Ali, an Albanian, as governor of Egypt (1805–48). During the course of the nineteenth century areas of Eastern Europe under Ottoman rule, such as Greece and the Balkans, revolted and gained their independence and asserted their cultural identity. Ottoman decline was hastened by the British foment of the revolt of the Arabs during the First World War. The Allied victory led to a division of the Fertile Crescent in their interests, and the carving out of states such as Iraq, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. Their boundaries were largely determined by the interests of the metropolitan powers, Britain and France, thus setting the scene for a number of the geo-political problems of the contemporary Muslim world. In the wake of the First World War, Mustafa Kemal (later known as Ataturk) formally abolished the Ottoman sultanate in 1923, and the position of Caliph, held by the Sultan, in 1924.[7]

The British mandate in Palestine opened the door to the implementation of the Balfour Declaration of 1917 that envisaged a national home for the Jews in Palestine. This, in 1948, in the wake of the Holocaust was to lead to the establishment of the state of Israel as a home for the Jewish survivors from Europe, generating an exodus of Palestinians from their homeland, many of whom continue to be refugees. Another consequence was the opportunity given to Ibn Sa‘ud, with his support of the Wahhabi current, to create the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The kingdom has gained a prestige in the Islamic world totally disproportionate to its population and cultural status by its custodianship of the holy places, and (especially after 1973) its oil wealth.

The decline and final collapse of both Mughal and Ottomon Empires led to political consequences that are still with us. But it was also accompanied by continuing association between their various components and the former metropolitan powers. This was to generate new currents of Islamic thought among Muslims, and a redefinition of their attitudes to the West. The first and most significant of these responses was the so-called Reformist Movement pioneered by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839–97) who had been in India at the time of the Indian Mutiny, and the Egyptian Muhammad 'Abduh (1849–1905).[8] This movement was to have influence across the Islamic world, from Casablanca to Batavia (now Jakarta). It had a role in encouraging local nationalisms, inspiring reforms in education, and stimulating a desire for technological advancement. Above all, it emphasised rational perspectives of the Islamic revelation. It was driven by a burning desire to bring Muslim peoples into the modern world as equals. This reformist movement, for many, represented the breaking of a mould, and stimulated a wide range of responses, positive and negative: some designed to lead to an adaptation to and accommodation with a world of Western cultural dominance; others leading to a more rigorous search for and realisation of a distinctive and identifiable Islamic authenticity in a world becoming increasingly unstable after the First World War. 'Abduh died in 1905, and his work was continued by Rashid Rida (1865–1935), but with Rida, the broad reformist concerns of 'Abduh shifted towards a neo-Hanbalite conservatism (the Hanbalite being the most literalist of the four schools of Law).

Among the most important of these responses was the foundation in Egypt in 1928 of the Muslim Brotherhood (*al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun*), the organisation that continues to serve as an ideological wellspring for virtually all contemporary Islamist movements.[9] The Muslim Brotherhood was founded by Hasan al-Banna (1906–49), who may be regarded as a proto-Islamist. In 1933, he established a women's branch of his organisation, Sisters of Islam.[10]

Like al-Afghani and 'Abduh, al-Banna sought reform but followed a conservative and a somewhat puritanical path based on a more literalist adherence to the foundation texts of Islam than the older generation of reformists. He was concerned to reform the way Islam was lived in the light of his understanding of the foundation texts. As an extension of this concern, he believed in the restoration of the Caliphate (it had been abolished by Ataturk in 1924) and the application of Islamic law in government. To achieve this, he focused on moral education (*tarbiya*) as the key to achieving this, promoting the study of Qur'an, Hadith, jurisprudence (*fiqh*), life of the Prophet and training in preaching. He constantly urged others to be faithful to their religious duties, and used to go through his village in the early hours of the morning to wake people up to perform the dawn prayer. His message is encapsulated in the slogans: 'God is our goal, the Messenger is our exemplar, the Qur'an is our constitution, struggle is our pathway, martyrdom is what we yearn for.'[11] There is a richness and intensity in al-Banna's spirituality, but also an authoritarian, even interventionist, character in the formulation of his

programme. Nevertheless, despite the radical character of his language, al-Banna, compared to later Islamist ideologues, was nuanced in his definition of the circumstances when action against a government perceived to be un-Islamic was justified.

From the beginning of the twentieth century, and indeed earlier, similar and parallel intellectual developments were taking place in South Asia. There is a long history of religious and political movements in the struggle against British rule in the sub-continent. It was largely the fear of loss of Muslim identity in an independent India that led Muslim leaders, notably Mohammed Ali Jinnah (1876–1948) eventually to insist on the partition of India and the establishment of Pakistan in 1947 as a national home for Muslims. This led to the emergence of Kashmir as a focus of Islamic–Hindu hostility.

Prior to partition, there had been many reformist Muslim scholars and intellectual leaders in the sub-continent, and prominent among those at the beginning of the modern period was Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817–98).[12] For our purposes, however, the most important figure is Abu'l-A'la Mawdudi (1903–79) who founded *Jama'at-i Islami* in 1941 in part as a reaction to Jinnah's leadership of the Muslim League, which had as its goal two nations in the Indian sub-continent. For Mawdudi, Muslims do not constitute a national entity, but rather a *jama'at* a community. For him, secularism, nationalism and democracy are the roots of all calamities. He thought that Pakistan – although after 1947 he migrated there – as envisaged by Jinnah, 'would be a pagan state'. His vision was the establishment of a theo-democracy where the Kingdom of God – God being the only legislator – is administered by the whole community of Muslims according to the shari'a. In Pakistan, *Jama'at-i Islami* was to become a highly organised religious grouping, with a strong social-welfare programme. Being a strong believer in *purdah* and Qur'anic punishments, the organisation was able to exercise constant pressure to introduce strict Islamic provisions into the constitution of Pakistan.[13] The principle he established in his writing and preaching, that in all affairs authority (*al-hakimiyya*) belongs to God alone (echoing the kharijite rallying cry of 658),[14] was to have a profound effect on Muslim development in Pakistan and beyond. He represented a radicalisation of Muslim political thought, a shift away from what may be called the 'brotherly' (*ikhwani*) emphasis of al-Banna's malleable application of shari'a to the direction of uncompromising struggle (*jihadi*).[15]

Mawdudi's thought had a significant influence on an Egyptian who was to emerge as the most radical and influential of Islamist ideologues up to the present, Sayyid Qutb. Sayyid Qutb (1903–66) developed further Mawdudi's views in the *jihadi* direction, giving further weight and legitimacy to the *hakimiyya* principle referred to above,[16] and denouncing as unbelief (*kufr*) and consequently as *dar al-harb* (the domain of war) whatever was outside the ambit of this rallying cry, and it was the duty of Muslims to fight whatever was without it.[17] Importantly, Qutb outlines a universal Islamic citizenship,

one that transcends tribal, ethnic, national and linguistic divisions. A Muslim's kinship, he claims, is first and foremost his bond with the Creator. To this, family kinship is secondary and is to be relinquished even if members of his kinship, as close as parents, do not share his Muslim belief. 'When the bond of the creed is tied, all believers are brothers even if they are not joined through lineage or by marriage.'[18]

Islam, for him, is to be distinguished from every other system of thought. It offers a law of life for the whole of existence, and he describes it in terms characteristically his own:

> Behind this cosmic existence [of which man is part], is a will that designed it, a decree (*qadar*) that moves it, and an order (*namus*) that holds it in harmony. … The norms (*qanun*) which govern his (man's) primal nature are the same as the order which governs existence as a whole. … Thus the *shari'a* that God has prescribed is a cosmic law in that it is linked to that of the cosmos as a whole. The duty to obey it derives from the necessity to realize the harmony between the life of man and the movement of the cosmos in the bosom of which he dwells.

The Qur'an, then, is a cosmic reality of the same status as the Universe itself, and the sacred Law of Islam is identical in nature to the law of the cosmos that governs the movement of the sun, moon and stars.[19] The radical character of his ideas, his charisma and the opposition he engendered to Egypt's President Jamal Abdul Nasser and Arab socialism led (directly or indirectly) to an attempted assassination of Nasser. He regarded Nasser's Arabism and Socialism as paganism, and committed himself to the Ikhwan, i.e. the Muslim Brotherhood. His personal charisma, the opposition he generated to the government, and the new dimension that he added to the intellectual life of the Ikhwan marked him out as an enemy of the regime. After years of imprisonment and torture, he was hanged in 1966.[20] Nevertheless, despite imprisonment, he transformed the religious and social programme of the Ikhwan into an ideology of radical Islam, one in which he still has a commanding presence across the Islamic world as its most influential and radical ideologue, and his writings have been translated into many languages. The ideas, and above all the mood his writings inspired, generated a number of radical sub-groups. They were of different levels of importance and effectiveness, but one of them was to make a dramatic impact on world perceptions of Islam.

This is a metamorphosis of the radical current engineered by al-Qaeda under the leadership of Usama bin Laden. The relationship of al-Qaeda to the Brotherhood movement as developed by Sayyid Qutb is difficult to determine. Its name, al-Qaeda, 'the base' (for *jihad* or radical action), which may also mean 'exemplary model', does not belong to the vocabulary of the Muslim Brotherhood, and this choice of name may suggest that it regards itself as a new movement, not the continuation of an existing one. In some

respects, its activities are in line with the goals of the *jihadi* stream as developed by Sayyid Qutb.[21] Thus, in his first *fatwa* of February 1998, bin Laden invokes *jihad* calling for the killing of 'Americans and their allies' as 'an individual duty (*fard 'ayn*)[22] for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it.'[23]

Bin Laden's intermittent statements, it needs to be said, have so far been strong on the causes they embrace (Palestine, Western Imperialism, etc.). They pullulate with a religious rhetoric designed to justify al-Qaeda's activities, but, compared to the writings of Mawdudi and Qutb, have little to offer on normative political theory. In other words, from an academic perspective, bin Laden's significance as an ideologue is minimal. He has issued decrees couched in religious rhetoric that appeal to potential revolutionary Muslims worldwide, and identified causes for them to support, but he has not yet provided a manifesto for the ideal Islamic polity that he hopes to achieve. This partly explains why the works of Mawdudi and Qutb, particularly Qutb's *Signposts,* remain the staple intellectual diet of most Islamist groups.

The development of this Islamist political theology/ideology, it should be noted, has occurred *pari passu* with, or as a consequence of, other political events and processes. Many of these have involved political failure. In the period of instability and uncertainty that followed the end of the Second World War, the Arab States, most of them under essentially secular governments, neither provided an inclusive political culture, nor enjoyed any success at the socio-economic level. The pan-Arab ideal in the grandiosely conceived Nasserite United Arab Republic and the subsequent Ba'ath party governments of Syria and Iraq failed to yield any concrete Arab political unity, and have proved powerless to bring a solution to the Palestinian cause championed. These were all factors providing an impetus for the emergence of a multi-stranded religio-political phenomenon such as Islamism: the religious aspect serving as a vehicle to mobilise protest, and the political as a programme to meet the desperate need for an alternative to the status quo.

Islam and Islamism

In face of the spectacular character of a number of the events perpetrated by the Islamists, it is important to retain a sense of proportion. It is important to stress that though 'Islamism' broadly refers to those who are committed to applying an ideological vision of Islam in the socio-political sphere, its manifestations differ and not all Islamists engage in violence. Indeed, committed radical Islamists are fringe groups in the world of Islam. Moreover, it cannot be overemphasised that far from being a movement that concerns only the West, 'Islamism', as a political current and in all its forms, is also recognised as problematic by Muslims in general. It is addressed by a number of Muslim thinkers concerned with Islam as their religion, its role in the world and the common good of their society. It cannot boast an acceptance by the mainstream Muslim community. And although some may tacitly condone its/their

activities, other Muslims are driven to question the competence of their leaders, and even the very basis of their faith at the sight of what other Muslims (i.e. Islamists) are doing in the name of Islam. As the late Indonesian journalist and Muslim intellectual Ahmad Wahib put it, in the wake of the slaughter of thousands of communists after the attempted coup in 1965:

> In fact I am of the view that were the Prophet Muhammad to return to this world, I am sure he would withdraw from circulation many of the hadith that are now, generally speaking, taken literally by his followers and replace them by new ones. … I have little confidence in those people who are called his heirs.[24]

In a similar spirit, Leila Ahmed believes that women have their own understanding of Islam, one that favours the oral and aural communication of the Islamic tradition and so differs from the 'official' or 'textual' Islam of men. Islam, she writes, 'as I got from [the women of my family], was gentle, generous, pacifist, inclusive, and somewhat mystical'.[25] Ahmed observes that women generally had a low opinion of the religious clerics for their strict textual tyranny. 'Generations of astute, thoughtful women, listening to the Qur'an, understood perfectly well its essential themes and its faith. And looking around them, they understood perfectly well, too, what a travesty men had made it.'[26] Ahmad Wahib and Leila Ahmed's views are clearly individualistic, but theirs are nevertheless the reaction of some Muslims to a phenomenon they deem as alien to their spiritualities.

Islamism itself, as has been indicated, is a term difficult to define without falling into misleading generalisations. It is commonly used in European academic and media parlance to refer to politically active groups that invoke Islam in their political rhetoric and/or activism as Islamists, not simply as Muslims. The term is intended to highlight the fact that this religiously based political rhetoric and activism goes beyond and is qualitatively different to works of devotion, social welfare and acts of piety that constitute the norms of Islamic praxis.

Islamism then is a term engaging a range of significances. It is different in character to what is referred to by the equally ambiguous word, fundamentalism. Though the term 'fundamentalists' is at times used interchangeably with 'Islamists', there are Muslims who disapprove of the use of this word, noting that all observing Muslims are necessarily fundamentalists by virtue of accepting the Qur'an as the revealed word of God. Adherents of other religious traditions based on the authority of revealed texts make the same claim for themselves. But it is important to note the distinction between them highlighted by Mahmood Mamdani, that fundamentalism is primarily a religious tendency that seeks salvation, whereas Islamism is more a political construct that seeks liberation (Mamdani, 2005).

In some ways, it is better to speak of Islamisms, for there are numbers of Islamist groups that find sources of support in different countries and with

different agendas. In its broadest meaning, Islamism represents the elevation of a commitment to Islam to the level of an ideology, and refers to groups who use Islam as a referent to define their political identities. Such groups include political parties that profess to be Islamic parties in their political activities.[27] The extreme manifestation of radical Islamism is seen in the activities of those who see Islam as a universalist ideology on the world stage, as a system to put to rights what they deem as the imbalance and injustice in the world. Inspired by this conviction, they approach Islam with a view to moulding it according to their aspirations and political agendas, and use it as a justification for the use of terror as a political weapon. This current has reached an ultimate level of intensity with the advent of suicide bombers, in effect reifying a religiously prohibited act into a meritorious one.

While radical Islamist groups may differ on the terms of their respective ideological reasoning and the goals they seek to achieve, there are common features to their theological rhetoric. They are often inspired by the perception of a grievous wrong, which they diagnose as *jahiliyya*, an abysmal ignorance of God, in world affairs. Their Truth confronts this *jahiliyya*, His prophet, and the divine imperatives for a just society. The particular political situations in which they find themselves, whether the fractured weaknesses of the Muslim world, and the incompetence and self-serving policies of its leaders, the American claims to world dominance, or the Israeli occupation of Palestine, all are symptomatic of this state of *jahiliyya.*

Their rhetoric often engenders in those who hear it a particular mental image of authenticity that becomes for them a compelling obsession. This authenticity is identified with the apprehension of a Truth that has authority over all space for all time. For those who adhere to it, the goal is the Islamisation of every level of society, all activities, and every branch of learning. Accordingly, the aim of being a Muslim, as Hasan al-Banna preached, and what later came to dominate the rhetoric of Islamist groups, is the realisation of this universalist ideology that sees that 'Islam is belief and cult, homeland and citizenship, religion and state, spirituality and action, Book and Sword'.[28]

There is a mystical dimension to some facets of Islamism. Adherence to such a current is for many the result or expression of a religious experience. There is in it an element of paradox. In one sense, Islam means that a person should give himself up to God. But the political activism is the means by which a new conversion of the individual will occur.[29] The notes found among the 11 September hijackers' belongings reflect this combination of mysticism and extreme political activism, which reaches its climax, i.e. martyrdom, in self-immolation for the sake of the cause:

> When the moment of truth comes near, and zero hour is upon you, open your chest welcoming death on the path of God. Always remember to conclude with the prayer, … or let your last words be: 'There is none worthy of worship but God, Muhammad is the messenger of God.' After that, God willing, the meeting is in the Highest Paradise, in the company of God.[30]

As Kanan Makiya and Hassan Mneimneh remark, the sense one gets after reading the hijackers' notes is that the political cause is not as central as one would expect, rather the 'sense throughout is that the would-be martyr is engaged in his action solely to please God'.[31] Olivier Roy notes that the radical Islamist acquires a virtue that 'presuppose[s] a true mystical experience', the ultimate experience being *jihad*. In the literature on *jihad*, the mystical experience of sacrificing one's life takes precedence over the political objective, e.g. creating an Islamic state, the former viewed as an act of supreme devotion where martyrdom has more meaning than victory.[32]

While recognising, and indeed emphasising, that radical Islamists are fringe groups in the Muslim communities, it must still be acknowledged that they are Muslims. As Jamil Sayah, an intellectual, put it, referring to the 11 September hijackers, 'These monsters were the servants of radical Islamism. They share with its adherents the fervour of Jihad, having "de-territorialized" it in order to carry out their struggle on a global scale', yet they are still 'Muslims, Muslims and terrorists'.[33]

However, despite the differences in character between the mainstream Muslims' and the Islamists' commitment to Islam, for many non-Muslims, the distinction between them is blurred. There are a number of reasons for this. One of them, already mentioned, is that the epistemology of Islam is skewed by the imprecision of the terms used to designate its trends and tendencies. Because of Islamism's constantly reiterated claim to authenticity, a superior commitment to the Islamic revelation, for many non-Muslims across the globe, Islam itself has come to be seen as synonymous with Islamism in its radical manifestation and so with terrorism. Further, the political configuration of the world, and the popularity of expressions such as 'Islam and the West' has resulted in the general use of the word 'Islam' as an abstract noun which phonetically is suggestive of Islamism.

Another reason is that Islamists in the general and legal sense of the word are nevertheless Muslims. They are so even if they consciously hijack elements from the Islamic tradition and fashion them into the rhetoric they use to present their own agenda in a way that goes well beyond the parameters of generally accepted Islamic belief, praxis and values. On the 2003 anniversary of 11 September, for example, a radical Islamist group based in the United Kingdom advertised a conference (which in the event did not take place), with a poster picturing the hijackers, describing them as 'The Magnificent 19'. It was captioned with a Qur'anic verse, '… they were youths who believed in their Lord and We increased them in guidance' (Kahf 18: 13). For the non-informed non-Muslims, it may seem 'logical' to link the Qur'an to the actions of these 'nineteen' of 11 September, as indicated by the dramatic increase in sales of copies of the Qur'an to individuals hoping to find in it an explanation of the event. Yet the verse cited,[34] far from having any connotation of violence, resonates in the Islamic tradition with Sufi piety and devotional practice.

Such selective adaptation of Qur'anic verses is not uncommon in these circles. Those who claimed responsibility for the March 2004 Madrid train

bombings justified their action by a collage of the first half of verse 126, Sura 16 (al-Nahl), 'If you punish [them] do so with the equivalent of that which you were afflicted . . .', with verse 191 of Sura 2 (al-Baqara), 'Kill them wherever you find them, and expel them from the places whence they expelled you. Scandal is worse than death', omitting the second half of verse 126, 'But if you endure [wrong] with patience, this is best for those who are patient'.[35]

The distinction between Muslims and Islamists is further blurred by Islamist-like statements uttered by senior religious authorities purporting to be in the name of the broader Muslim community. One example relates to post-war Iraq (2003). Sheikh Nabawi Mohammad El-Esh, a senior cleric of al-Azhar, an authoritative source of jurisprudential opinions (*fatwa*) in Sunni Islam, issued a *fatwa* during a Friday sermon in Alexandria calling for a holy war (*jihad*) to fight the 'infidels'. He also called on Muslims and Arab states to boycott the newly organised Iraqi Governing Council (IGC), accusing Iraqi politicians and clerics who participated in it as collaborators.[36] It was only ten days later that the Grand Shaikh of Azhar, Mohammad Sayed Tantawi, disavowed the *fatwa,* but not before it had generated a violent response on the Arab street. The popular Iraqi Shi'ite cleric, Ayatollah Mohammad Baqir Al-Hakim, whose short-lived post-Saddam political experience had been marked by a somewhat adaptive approach to the American occupation, was named as a 'collaborator' in El-Esh's *fatwa*, and was killed along with 124 others in a mosque in Najaf in a 'terrorist' attack.[37]

All of this could suggest that 'radical' Islamism is just another facet of mainstream Islam. A facet it may be, given that mainstream Islam is not a monolithic and unambiguous category. But this observation may lead to erroneous generalisations unless one takes into account the complex nature of the reality. In contrast to al-Esh, Sheikh Abdul Aziz al-Sheik, the most senior cleric in Saudi Arabia, preaching on the occasion of the Hajj to an audience of two million Muslims at Namira mosque close to Mount Arafat on 1 February 2004, denounced terrorists, calling them an affront to Islam, and accused them of shedding Muslim blood.[38] Indeed, it has to be realised that the majority of the radical Islamists' victims are themselves Muslims.[39] Islamist movements had in fact been active in Muslim countries long before 11 September. Among their victims were *ulamas* such as Muhammad al-Dhahabi, the Egyptian Minister of Waqf (Religious Endowment), who was assassinated in 1977, Muhammad al-Misri, the Director of Waqf in Aleppo, in 1979, and President Sadat of Egypt in 1981. The regime of Zia al-Haq as early as the 1980s was fomenting the growth of radical Islamism in Pakistan, in many respects at the expense of Muslim women's rights. At the time of his death he had laid the ground for Pakistani support of the Taliban in Afghanistan, with even worse consequences for women. By 10 September 2001, radical Islamists in Algeria had been responsible for the deaths of at least 70,000 Muslims[40] because those Muslims did not support radical Islamist parties.[41] The bloody period that saw many Muslims killed in Algeria was escalated when the ruling party, the FLN (Front de Libération

Nationale) cancelled the second round of elections to be held in January 1992 after the opposition party, the Islamic Salvation Front, had won the first round in December 1991.[42] On the surface then, the terms radical Islamist and Islamist, Islam and Islamism, and so Muslim and Islamist or radical Islamist appear to overlap, but on examination, this is by no means the case.

Islamism as a religio-political phenomenon

Although Islamists lay claim to authority in the political as well as religious spheres, and much of their activity is directed against the West, Islam itself is not necessarily the prime reason or even the catalyst for this phenomenon. Rather, it can be argued that it is the political context in which their views have taken shape, rather than their religious ideals, that is the catalyst for the development of the movement. The political realities determining this context can be seen as internal and external to their societies.

As for those that are internal, in many Muslim countries, there is little room for the politics of opposition. Political dissent is likely to result in consequences ranging from imprisonment, self-exile or even extra-judicial assassination. In some countries, opposition political parties do exist, but for little more than cosmetic purposes. They have minimal influence on policy. Some Muslim writers have made caustic references to this. The Algerian novelist Ahlam Mustaghanmi puts it thus: 'In the Arab world, parents teach their children how to speak and when they grow up, Arab Governments teach them how to be silent.' Muhammad al-Hajiri describes Arab leaders as 'best suited as a basis for theoretical studies of dictatorships, ... there is no room in their dictionary for words such as individual liberty or pluralism'.[43] While it would be an exaggeration to say that all the Muslim world is run by dictators, authoritarian tendencies are all too often evident in the government of many of its states.

As for the external factors, they are equally pernicious. In his study *The Future of Political Islam*, Graham Fuller observes how US policies have contributed to the radicalisation of Islamist movements. He writes, '[D]espite its rhetorical stance in favor of democracy worldwide, Washington possesses an unspoken sense that representative governments in most Muslim states will be less acquiescent to American interests than the current generation of authoritarian leaders'.[44] George W. Bush himself, the first time an American President referred to the lack of success of such policies, once observed, '[S]ixty years of Western nations excusing and accommodating the lack of freedom in the Middle East did nothing to make us safe'.[45] Indeed, Western nations were not only 'excusing', but also contributing to this lack of freedom in the Middle East.

In the oppressive political climate of many Muslim states, a current such as 'Islamism' has at its disposal a transcendental claim to authority deriving from its appeal to religion, and is able to use it effectively as a vehicle for the expression of dissent. And it is in such a climate that the Qur'anic verses passionately denouncing social injustice,[46] and a hadith such as 'Fear the cry of

the oppressed, for there is no barrier between it and God',[47] have far-reaching resonances. The divine support Muslims will receive when this is the cause they fight for is assured in such Qur'anic verses as 'If twenty of you are stead-fast, they will conquer two hundred, if there are a hundred of you, they will conquer a thousand' (Qur 8:65). Individual leaders with a personal charisma, by the skilful use of such sacral utterances that offer values and a dynamic for those who see themselves as oppressed, can exercise an almost hypnotic con-trol over their followers, and lead them where they will.

It is not difficult to see reasons for an animus against the West as a further component of the powerhouse driving Islamism. We have already referred to the role of the West among the external influences maintaining authoritarian regimes in power. There are others. In his study of Islamist movements, *Yathrib al-Jadida* (The New Yathrib),[48] Muhammad Jamal Barut notes that the rhetoric used by the Islamists, speaking of 'the "omnipotence" of Islam, its "universality" and its "leadership" amounts to nothing more than an ide-ology elaborated to disguise the sense of "weakness", "marginalisation" and liability to coercion'[49] that they perceive in their Islamic world when they compare themselves to the West. Thus they are convinced that the only way to triumph over the power of the West, and the duplicity of its scheming against Islam and the Muslim world, is to unite Muslims through the realisa-tion of the inner resources of a strong political and spiritual entity, i.e. Islam itself, which they all share. In so doing, as Barut observes, 'Islamism con-fronts the West in the name of the universality of Islam and [its belief in] its comprehensive applicability in all spheres (*shumuliyya*) [of human activity]'.[50]

Barut continues, 'The Islamist discourse elaborates a conspiracy on the part of both East and West against the Muslim world'. He quotes Qutb, 'both of them [i.e. East and West] wish to devour us. We are their intended victim'. For the West to take over the Muslim world, in Qutbian views, it has to ensure that 'we [i.e. the Muslim world] do not become an independent entity, rather that we remain small insignificant states'. There is only one way to defeat this conspiracy. It is 'for us [Muslims] to be an independent entity har-nessed neither to East nor West, both of whom are bent on devouring us one by one in our present divided state'.[51] From this, one may argue that the Islamist response to such perceived threats, though on the surface religious, is primarily a reaction to internal factors in many Muslim countries. The West is perceived as complicit in the authority that their governments enjoy.

The Islamist mindset in a comparative context

This association of radical Islamism with violence raises the question as to whether Islam is more liable to be subverted to violence, and the focus of a call to armed conflict, than other religious movements. It is indeed a paradox that the phrase of total adoration *Allahu Akbar* – God is Most Great, indicat-ing utter submission to God's will, doubles as a battle cry, and is used to work up a crowd and incite it to violence. There are elements in this history of

Islam that can lend themselves to this. In particular the stories told of some of Muhammad's battles, especially the battle of Badr, his first victory, capture the imagination of many Muslims. In it, he showed great courage and an extraordinary capacity for leadership. The references that the Qur'an makes to it are orchestrated with accounts of hosts of angels supporting the Muslims (Qur 3:124–125). It can be used to serve as a model and inspiration for Muslims in situations where they perceive themselves as under threat. But as opposed to these, there are many accounts of Muhammad's skill in negotiation, his sightedness and shrewdness in avoiding conflict whenever possible.

While Islam is often presented in the headlines as a widespread source of violence, there are numerous non-Muslim movements that use religion as their ideological foundation to give legitimacy to violence and so further their causes. As comparative studies on religion have shown, different religions have been used as an instrument of empowerment and of psychological terror. In his study *Terror in the Mind of God*, Mark Juergensmeyer surveys an array of conflicts fought in the name of their respective religions: Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism and Hinduism.[52] He observes that the rise in religious-based violence has to do not just 'with the nature of religious imagination, which has always had the propensity to absolutise and to project images of cosmic war', but also with 'the social tensions of this moment of history that cry out for absolute solutions'.[53]

At a rhetorical level at least, some expressions of American ideologies are a mirror of those of the Islamists. 'Axis of evil',[54] 'You are either with us or against us', 'War against the civilised world',[55] are but examples of such (Western) rhetoric that express political values in doctrinal and dichotomous terms. To paraphrase Olivier Roy, just as some Islamists see in themselves a 'green' hope for humanity replacing a failed red one, so do some Americans and others in the West see Islam a green peril replacing the defeated red one.[56] There are, too, professed Christian groups that have resorted to violence, both to enforce orthodoxies among themselves, and to impose formulations of belief upon others, or to settle grievances. Such fringe groups, notably in the United States, are dedicated to violent action to achieve a purified society. They include a number of Christian Militia, the Christian Identity Movement (of which Timothy McVeigh was a member), and some anti-abortion activists. The rhetoric and actions of both Unionists and Republicans in Northern Ireland are ideologically similar to those of the Islamists, even if they are on a smaller scale. It was also the Christian Phalange (under the watchful eye of the Israeli army) that perpetrated the slaughter of Palestinian civilians in the Palestinian refugee camps of Lebanon, Sabra and Shatila.[57]

The list of religious-based movements that have carried out violence to impose their beliefs and values is long. It is all the more important then to set Islamism, in all its forms, in a wider context to make comparison possible, one that considers it along with other such ideologies, giving weight to the psychological states that motivate religious belief into individual or group

action, and likewise the ways in which words and phrases from a sacred text can take on a life of their own.

An article by Jean Baudrillard, written in the wake of 11 September, shows a remarkable percipience. He argues that Islam is in fact a spectral enemy, to the West a façade for more complex and deeper problems associated with the illusion that with the spread and success of liberalism, 'good' will triumph over 'evil'. Were Islam to rule the world, he opines, a terrorist movement would arise and attempt to overthrow it.[58] His observation is particularly worthy of note in view of the seemingly natural inclination of many in the international community to surmise that terror as a political weapon is a monopoly of Muslims despite abundant evidence to the contrary.

This said, however, it would be myopic not to acknowledge that in the past few decades, Islam, perhaps more than other religions, has been deployed globally as an instrument of violence. Notwithstanding the richness and diversity of the civilisations it has engendered, as Amin Maalouf notes (in response to simplistic apologists for the religion), 'it is of little consolation to know that Islam was tolerant in the eighth century, if today [in the name of Islam] priests' throats are cut, intellectuals stabbed and tourists machine-gunned'.[59]

Maalouf goes on to observe that people have a tendency to exaggerate the influence of religion on society and underestimate the influence of society on religion. Like Baudrillard, he argues that when Muslims of the Third World mount violent attacks on the West, it is not because they are Muslims and the West is Christian, but because 'they are poor, dominated, ridiculed, and that the West is rich and powerful'.[60] He illustrates this with the apposite remark that one can read tens of volumes on the history of Islam and not understand a thing of what is happening in Algeria, but one only needs to read thirty pages on colonialism to understand a great deal.[61]

It is not only the immediate social environment that influences the forms a religion takes, although, as already noted, this may predispose some individuals to Islamism. External interferences may also play a role, and contribute to an emphasis on specific theological articulations. One of the reactions of the United States to the Iranian–Shi'ite revolution was to make use of its strategic alliance with Saudi Arabia. The success of the Iranian revolution in 1979 caused alarm in American government circles. Thus to prevent the spread of an Iranian–Shi'ite style of militancy which it feared would break out elsewhere in the Islamic world, the United States encouraged the Saudis to fund Wahhabi *madrasas* across the Muslim world in the hope that they would act as a bulwark against further Shi'ite aggression, blissfully unaware of the radicalism and intolerant iconoclasm of the Wahhabis, and without realising the Wahhabite deep hostility to the more spiritual and mystical dimensions of Islam.[62] As Michel Feher notes, the American support of Wahhabi fundamentalism in the early 1980s was given in the hope that it 'would fulfill the triple mission … purportedly as a homeopathic antidote to Tehran's brand of Islamist militancy, of supporting Saddam Hussein's war effort against Iran, and of bankrolling the Afghan

resistance to Soviet occupation'.[63] This example serves to stress that Islamism is not about what Islam *is* but about what Islam can be made to be if politically manipulated. It is ironic that from the perspective of post 2003–04, all three 'missions' have come back to haunt the US with a vengeance.

Responses to Islamism

If an assessment of Islamism is problematic, responses to it are equally so. For some observers, particularly Western policy makers, one response is to attempt to influence public opinion in the Muslim world and in the West by promoting slogans such as 'Democracy in Islam!' or 'Support Liberal Islam!'. In line with the promotion of the US doctrine that democracy provides 'security, stability and prosperity for the entire world',[64] some analysts have been eagerly searching for any religious rulings or even anecdotes in the Islamic tradition that lend themselves to the identification of religious roots for democracy in Islam.[65] It is not difficult to reinterpret or manipulate the meaning of a religious text in order to derive from it principles to suit different needs and situations. In the case of Islam, one can speak for instance of the notions of consensus (*ijma'*) or deliberation (*shura*) and devise a theoretical foundation for democracy around them.

There are very good reasons why inclusive political participation should be encouraged in the Muslim world. But why should Islam, all of a sudden, be seen as the cultural catalyst for such a development, if indeed it is the case that Islam itself is the cultural cause for the Muslim states' democratic deficit, as Huntington would have it. This question is pertinent in view of the fact that the political culture of most Muslim states is one characterised much less by 'Islamic' features and much more by authoritarian secular ones. Moreover, and as the study by Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart shows, Muslims in general, like their Western counterparts, articulate similar rhetoric about political values as far as governance is concerned. Indeed, Islamists too are devising theories of practical politics in harmony with egalitarian democratic tendencies. In the idealised Islamic state they aim for, all members may participate in the governing of society through God's revealed law. As Mohammad Mahdi Akef, the new leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, put it, 'We embrace the concept of shura, which is the closest governance concept to Western democracy. How else could a movement have existed for 75 years if it had not been run democratically and managed via institutions and not individuals.'[66]

As an extension of attempts to 'democratise' Islam by inventing and mouthing ad nauseam appropriate slogans, some analysts consider that the most effective response is to purify Islam of its perceived warlike tendencies, and emphasise the peaceful qualities it enjoins. This approach leads to the identification on their part of a 'liberal' Islam, relying on and endorsing individuals and groups from within the Muslim community whose critical voices

often echo Western ideas of what Islam should be or are accommodating of Western interests. All that is necessary to respond to the challenge of Islamism, they believe, is to devise the formula of a 'liberal' Islam, then pour it into the social and ideological mix, stir, and an embrace of (Western) democracy will automatically follow.

This is inadequate for a number of reasons. One, to paraphrase Amin Maalouf, is that it is quite easy to delve into the sacred texts, consult the exegetes, and choose what is to one's taste and in accord with the ends one desires, for there are always a range of interpretations to be found. Indeed, if individual verses of the Qur'an are taken in their existential moment, without any reference to context, it is as easy to find a verse enjoining relentless combat against the unbeliever as one extolling peace and pluralism.[67] And in such a game of verses, played according to such rules, how is one verse to be regarded as having more authority than another, given that all are equally the word of God?

Another reason is that the use of the word liberal to qualify a religion is virtually oxymoronic. There is nothing liberal in the Islamic profession of faith *la ilaha illa'llah* – there is no God but the God. Every religion has its axes of contradiction, of denial and affirmation. The very names of God, that is the ninety-nine most beautiful names revealed in the Qur'an, testify to the tension implicit in terms such as eternal – created, heaven – earth, good – evil, true – false. God is *al-Muhyi* and *al-Mumit* – He brings to life, and He slays; *al-'Afuw* and *al-Muntaqim* – He is the Pardoner and the Avenger; *al-Nafi'* and *al-Darr* – the Beneficent and the Harmer. It is only through the recognition of such tensions, paradoxes and apparent contradictions that points of equilibrium are to be sought.

The fundamental issue then is not whether Islam is inherently peaceful or aggressive, whether it is likely to engender peace or war. Like other religions, it can engender both. But also, as in other religions, there is always room for new insights into its foundation texts, or the rediscovery of old ones that have been neglected or forgotten. The foremost problem now is how to address the non-religious aspects of the global political terrain that are currently being addressed in an incongruous religious discourse and activism.

Notes

 1 The use of expressions 'Islamic/Muslim world' or the 'world of Islam' in this chapter are not intended to suggest that Islam is the single defining feature of the Islamic world. On the contrary, this chapter cautions against such essentialist views. Asef Bayat has rightly highlighted the problems associated with such essentialist categories, see Bayat (2003).
 2 Ahmed, A.S. (2003); see also Karabell (2003), p. 20.
 3 The word in this sense is now widely used to refer to adherents of religions who are intolerant of other traditions and/or have recourse to violence.
 4 Huntington (1998), p. 29. It is worth noting here that a recent empirical study carried out across 75 nations, including 9 Islamic ones, showed that Huntington's 'thesis erroneously assumed that the primary cultural fault line between the West and Islam concerns government', rather the 'values separating Islam and the West revolve far more centrally around Eros than Demos'. See Norris and Inglehart (2003).

5 Lewis (2003). On this point and for a critical review of Lewis's book, see Sabra (2003).

6 A discussion of these three zones is at the core of J. Voll's *Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World* (1982). Africa is another cultural Muslim zone, but European powers had a different kind of engagement with Africa, one that is not relevant to the points raised in this chapter.

7 An accessible account of the historical background of these events is given in Lapidus (2002). For this period refer to chapter 23, 'The Dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the modernization of Turkey', pp. 489–501; chapter 24, 'Egypt: secularism and Islamic modernity', pp. 512–526, and chapter 25, 'The Arab Middle East: Arabism, military states and Islam', pp. 535–580.

8 Ibid. pp. 516–519.

9 Al-Bizri (1994), pp. 20–22.

10 Ferre (1981–82), p. 7.

11 Ibid. p. 4.

12 See Lapidus (2002), chapter 27, 'Secularism and Islam in Central and Southern Asia', pp. 620–640.

13 See Schimmel (1980), pp. 237–243.

14 The first radical sect in Islam. It first appeared in 658, and was responsible in 661 for the murder of 'Ali, the fourth Caliph, as he entered the mosque in Kufa. See Lapidus (2002), p. 47.

15 Al–Bizri (1994), pp. 34–36.

16 Ibid.

17 Qutb (1970), p. 137.

18 Ibid. pp. 138–139.

19 Ibid. pp. 98–100.

20 Johns (1990), pp 143–170.

21 Abu Qatada, suspected to be linked to al-Qaeda, noted in a letter, which was leaked out of his prison in London, that at a young age, Ayman al-Zawahiri was influenced by the writings of Sayyid Qutb. See al-Tawil (2004).

22 Note that *fard 'ayn* is a technical term in jurisprudence designating religious duties to be performed by every Muslim individual such as *hajj*, fast or prayers. In general circumstances, political affairs are grouped under *fard kifaya*, i.e. a duty that falls upon some individuals of the Muslim community to be performed on behalf of the whole. It is only under special circumstances when the land of Islam is under threat or invaded that politics and *jihad* become an individual's duty. Bin Laden's message therefore is meant to address not states but Muslims (in Muslim or non-Muslim states).

23 Bin Laden *et al.* (1998).

24 As cited and rendered in Johns (1987), pp. 258–259.

25 Ahmed, (1999), p. 13. Leila Ahmed is Massachusetts' Divinity School's first Professor of Women's Studies in Religion.

26 Ibid. p. 14.

27 See for instance Fuller (2003).

28 Al-Banna (1981–82), p. 27 (French translation p. 35).

29 Roy, (1996), p. 65.

30 As rendered and cited in Makiya and Mneimneh (2002), p. 20. Note the phrase 'the highest paradise' occurs in a hadith listed in Wensinck (1962), vol. IV, p. 343.

31 Makiya and Mneimneh, ibid.

32 Roy (1996), p. 66.

33 Sayah (2002).

34 This verse is associated by some commentators with a Christian tradition of the sleepers of Ephesus, who miraculously sheltered in a cave where, protected from the persecution of Decius, they slept unharmed for many years.

35 Statement by Kata'ib Abi Hafs al-Misri, published in *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, vol. 15, Issue 4603, Friday 12 March 2004.

36 Anis (2003); Shahine (2003).

37 Anis, ibid. Some analysts have raised the question as to whether the *fatwa* was disavowed by the Grand Imam, ten days after it was issued, in the wake of a visit from/pressure by the US Ambassador to Egypt David Welch; Shahine, ibid.

38 AP Reuters in *The Australian*, 2 February 2004.

39 Lemsine (2001) and Afzal-Khan (2001).

40 See the statement by Human Rights Watch at www.unhchr.ch/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/(Symbol)/E.CN.4.1999.NG0.61.En?Opendocument, (accessed on 3 January 2004).

41 Burgat (2003), pp. 106–107.

42 Ibid, pp. 102–106.

43 Al-Hajiri (2003).

44 Fuller (2003), p. 158 (Fuller is a former Vice-Chairman of the National Intelligence Council at the CIA).

45 Remarks by President George W. Bush at the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy, www.nedorg/events/anniversary/oct1603–Bush.html (accessed 3 January 2004).

46 For example Qur 11:84–85, 68:17–27, 107:1–5.

47 Listed in Wensinck (1962) vol. IV, p. 82.

48 The name is symbolic. It suggests a search for a new al-Madina, a new city of the Prophet, one in which Islam is as fully realised as it had been in the first al-Madina, during the lifetime of the Prophet.

49 Barut (1994), p. 148.

50 Ibid. p. 148.

51 Ibid. pp. 148–149.

52 Juergensmeyer (2001).

53 Ibid. p. 242.

54 George W. Bush, State of the Union Address, 29 January 2002, www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129–11.html (accessed 25 January 2004).

55 'You are either with us or against us', 6 November 2001, www.cnn.com/2001/US/11/06/gen.attack.on.terror/ (accessed 25 January 2004).

56 Roy (1996), p. 122.

57 For these and other groups refer to the study by Juergensmeyer (2001).

58 Baudrillard (2001).

59 Maalouf (1998), p. 65.

60 Ibid. p. 76.

61 Ibid. p. 77.

62 Bendle (2003), pp. 125–140.

63 Feher (2002).

64 See, for instance, The United States Department of State on 'Democracy', www.state.gov/g/drl/democ (accessed 5 January 2004).

65 See State of the Union Address 2002. See also Sen (2003).

66 Abdel-Latif (2004).

67 Maalouf (1998), p. 59.

References

Abdel-Latif, O. (2004) 'Settling for small steps', *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 22–28 January, www.weekly.ahram.org.eg/2004/674/eg5.htm (accessed 22 January 2004).

Afzal-Khan, F. (2001) 'Here are the Muslim Feminist Voices, Mr Rushdie!', *Counterpunch*, 16 November, www.counterpunch.org/fawzia1.html.

Ahmed, A.S. (2003) *Islam under Siege: Living Dangerously in a Post-Honor World*, Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Ahmed, L. (1999) 'The Heard Word: Passing on the message of Islam, woman to woman', *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*, vol. 28, no. 2/3, 13–14.

Anis, M. (2003) 'The War of Fatwas', *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 4–10 September, no. 654, www.weekly.ahram.org.eg/print/2003/654/Fr2.htm (accessed 5 September 2003).

al-Banna, H. in 'Risalat al-mu'tamar al-khamis', in Ferre A. (1981–82) 'Courants Actuels dans L'Islam: Les frères Musulmans' (première partie), *Etudes Arabes* no. 61, pp. 26–40.

Barut, M. (1994) *Yathrib al-Jadida: al-Harakat al-Islamiyya al-Rahina* (The New Yathrib: Contemporary Islamist Movements), Beirut: Riad El-Rayyes Books.

Baudrillard, J. (2001) 'L'esprit du terrorisme', *Le Monde*, 2 November.

Bayat, A. (2003) 'The Use and Abuse of "Muslim Societies"', *ISIM* (International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World) *Newsletter*, 13 December.

Bendle, M. (2003) 'Global Jihad and the Battle for the Soul of Islam', *Australian Religious Studies Review*, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 125–140.

al-Bizri, D. (1994) *Dunya al-Din wa-1-Dawla: al-Islamiyyun wa-Iltibasat Mashru'ihim* (The World of Religion and State: The Islamists and the Ambiguities of their Program), Beirut: Dar al-Nahar.

Burgat, F. (2003) *Face to Face with Political Islam*, London: I.B. Tauris & Co.

Feher, M. (2002) 'Robert Fisk's Newspapers', *Theory & Event*, vol. 5, no. 4.

Ferre A. (1981–82) 'Courants Actuels dans L'Islam: Les frères Musulmans' (première partie), *Etudes Arabes* no. 61, pp. 5–16.

Fuller, G. (2003) *The Future of Political Islam*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

al-Hajiri, M. (2003) 'Wala'im al-Diktator al-'Arabi' (the Banquets of the Arab Dictator), *al-Nahar*, 2 May (al-Mulhaq al-Thaqafi), www.annaharonline.com/cults/page3.htm (accessed 3 May 2003).

Huntington, S. (1998) *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York: Simon & Schuster.

Johns, A. H. (1987) 'An Islamic System or Islamic Values? Nucleus of a Debate in Contemporary Indonesia', in W. Roff (ed.), *Islam and the Political Economy of Meaning: Comparative Studies of Muslim Discourse*, London: Croom Helm, pp. 254–280.

—— (1990) 'Let My People Go! Sayyid Qutb and the Vocation of Moses', in *Islam & Christian Muslim Relations*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 143–170.

Juergensmeyer, M. (2001) *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Karabell, Z. (2003) *The Tablet*, 25 October, pp. 19–20.

bin Laden, O. *et al*. 'Jihad against Jews and Crusaders', 23 February. See http://lib1.1ibrary.cornell.edu/colldev/mideast/fatw2.htm for the Arabic version, and see http://lib1.1ibrary.cornell.edu/colldev/mideast/wif.htm for the English version.

Lapidus, I. (2002) *A History of Islamic Societies*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2nd edition).

Lemsine, A. (2001) 'The Suffering of Algerian Women at the Hands of Islamists', *Middle East Times,* Cairo, 16 March, http://www.islamfortoday.com/algeria.htm.

Lewis, B. *(2003) What Went Wrong? The Clash between Islam and Modernity in the Middle East*, Perennial.

Maalouf, A. (1998) *Les Identités Meurtrières*, Paris: Editions Grasset & Fasquelle.

Makiya, K. and Mneimneh, H. (2002) 'Manual for a Raid', *New York Review of Books*, 17 January, pp. 18–21.

Mamdani, M. (2005) 'Future of Political Islam', *Financial Review*, January.

Norris, P. and Inglehart, R. (2003) 'The True Clash of Civilizations', *Foreign Policy*, March/April.

Qutb, S. (1970) *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq* (Signposts), Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq.

Roy, O. (1996) *The Failure of Political Islam*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Sabra, A. (2003) 'What is Wrong with *What Went Wrong?*', *Middle East Report*, August.

Sayah, J. (2002) 'L'Islam ventriloque', *Le Monde*, 18 October.

Schimmel, A. (1980) *Islam in the Indian Subcontinent*, Leiden-Koln: E.J. Brill.

Sen, A. (2003) 'Democracy and its Global Roots', *New Republic*, 6 November.

Shahine, G. (2003) 'In the eye of the storm', *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 11–17 September, no. 655, www.weekly.ahram.org.eg/print/2003/655/eg9.htm (accessed 12 Septmber 2003).

al-Tawil, K. (2004) 'Abu Qatada, al-Zawahiri Hakim al-Haraka al-Islamiyya', *al-hayat*, 12 May, www.daralhayat.com/special/issues/05-2004/20040511-12p15-01.txt/story.html (accessed 12 May 2004).

Voll, J. (1982) *Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World*, London and Colorado: Longman & Westview.

Wensinck, A. (1962) *Concordance et Indices de la Tradition Musulmane*, Leiden: E.J. Brill.

2 Islam as a political force in international politics

Anoushiravan Ehteshami

Introduction

Some of the more daring analysts of our age, not unlike many of their prede-cessors who had lived through uncertain times, have acquired the unfair label of prophets of doom for suggesting that the collapse of the 1946–1990 Cold War order has ushered in a new era of turbulence – one of 'rapid and cascad-ing change', according to Rosenau[1] – which is causing international instability and antagonism on a qualitatively different magnitude. In the new environment 'more and more of the interactions that sustain world politics unfold without the direct involvement of nations or states … [denoting] the presence of new structures and processes while at the same time allowing for still further structural development'.[2] The new antagonisms which are said to be driving international relations are increasingly based on such variables as culture, group identity and religion. With the state still acting as the domi-nant partner in the politics of nations, confrontations based on these factors have increased in our turbulent age and have added to the existing forms of inter-state tensions. Moreover, the situation is exacerbated by globalisation, which has not only increased interdependencies of countries and regions, but has also reduced the distinctions between the 'local' and the 'global'.

On the issue of new variables affecting international politics, Juergensmeyer, for instance, warns of the global consequences of an emerging new cold war based on 'the resurgence of parochial identities based on ethnic and religious allegiances'.[3] With 11 September as a backdrop, these indeed were prophetic words, but in the early 1990s some pundits had gone even further, pointing to the resurgence of religion as a direct threat to interna-tional stability. Their analyses, though sobering, seem to fit the complexities of an age in which the end of the Cold War and the rapid demise of an 'evil empire' (the Soviet superpower) had soon given way to a much more complex and anarchic international order beset by an array of new security challenges and conflict situations which proved to be largely fluid in content and asym-metrical in nature.

But crucial differences separate the various schools of thought on our new age. Those who believe in the inevitability of the confrontation between

political Islam (as one of these 'parochial identities') and the prevailing international order try to draw the map of the new age. They point to the rise of Islam militancy as evidence for their case. Their subjects of study, namely the Islamic activists, on the other hand, are constantly trying to seize the moment and capitalise on the opportunities created by the new disorder to redraw the existing international system in terms that they perceive to be to the Muslims' advantage. Islamist engagement with the international system can easily be misconstrued, however, if not viewed within its proper context.[4]

Despite our assumptions about the transferability of Islamist violence to all corners of the globe, not all Islamists willingly engage with the international system, or indeed challenge it. For many, engagement would be equal to giving the prevailing sovereign state system legitimacy. There is amongst the many layers of Arab Islamist radicals, for instance, a strong seam which totally rejects a territorially distinct Muslim nation-state as being a Western construct, man-made, and therefore un-Islamic. Al-Nabhani is one such Islamist ideologue who has argued that 'a nuclear Islamic state established in an Arab country must not consider relations with other Muslim states to fall within its foreign relations: It must not exchange diplomats or establish treaties with them'.[5] Bin Laden and company may have followed the policy of 'Islam in one country' (Afghanistan) as their operational tactic, but their strategy of removing the borders between (Sunni) Muslims is certainly consistent with that of the *Hezb al-Tahrir al-Islami*, for example, or its equivalent in several other Arab countries. Ironically though, while modern radical Islamists reject the worth of independent Muslim nation-states as they are currently constituted, their ranks were deeply divided in the anti-colonial struggles of many Muslim peoples in the mid-twentieth century. While many rank-and-file Islamists responded to the call and joined the nationalist struggle against European colonial powers, others lost much ground to the nationalist forces for rejecting the national struggle for independence as un-Islamic and contrary to the Muslim requirement of unification of the *umma*, the Muslim community at large.[6] Over sixty years of independence, and the Arab states' failure (across the board) to provide for even the most basic needs of the population, have deepened the tensions between the Arab rulers of their nation-states and their radical Islamist counterparts. It is for this, if for no other reason, that most Islamists still direct much of their fire at their own regimes rather than the guarantors of the prevailing international system. They are thus trapped in the prism of the nation-state: they cannot overcome it if they are functioning with it. As Tripp states, 'there is the concern that seeking to play the game of mass politics successfully within the framework of the modern state, they will succumb to the secularizing logic of democracy, of economic development, and of the territorial state'.[7]

Thus, in struggling against their own rulers they are the logistical prisoners of their own narrow operational needs; and yet they are driven by a strong transnational pan-Islamic worldview and puritanical ideological justification for their actions. The question of the day, therefore, is: has al-Qaeda finally

found the passage out of the intellectual and practical prison which had formed the key dilemma of the modern pan-Islamist movements? Has it found a short cut, as it were, out of the quagmire that Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood (*al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun*), as the founding modern organisation of militant Islam, never managed fully to break free of in its struggles which span most of the twentieth century? Investigations of such questions require a root and branch analysis which uses a variety of analytical tools in order to locate political Islam in a wider international setting.

Perspectives on political Islam

There are several distinct ways in which one can study political Islam as a radical force in the modern world. The first approach sees it as a response to the monumental crisis of the nation-state in the Muslim Middle East, which has been caused by a combination of factors in the economic, political and social realms. The crisis of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) state is often expressed in terms of social deprivation, lingering poverty, corruption, nepotism, reliance on the West for security and defence, dependence on the West for economic assistance, diminishing degree of political legitimacy, absence of the rule of law, problems of stability associated with unclear political succession procedures, and unaccountable and unresponsive political systems. These problems have been compounded in recent years by rapid population growth, haphazard urbanisation, and environmental degradation. Radical Islam, therefore, could be said to be an extremist response to a general crisis.[8] In Taylor's words, 'The Islamic reconstructionist response to the sociopolitical crisis in the Middle East represents the attempt of Muslims to retrieve their own religious heritage and make it the foundation of a new public order.'[9]

The second approach views Islamic radicalism as a form of cultural nationalism, a nativist response to the weakening of traditional 'authentic' socio-economic structures. Closely related to this school are the ideas of Michael Fischer, who made the argument in the early 1980s that political Islam was a reaction to Muslim cultural erosion.[10] Islamism is a passing, and badly misperceived, revivalist movement which poses little danger to the West, and is in actual fact a vital part of the cultural renewal of the Third World peoples.[11] Fundamentalist movements, moreover, are seen as no more than a response to the process of globalisation, which in all of its aspects – economic organisation and processes, culture, and politics – challenges standards and ways of life of non-Western societies. The third perspective diverts somewhat from this line of reasoning to suggest that the phenomena should be viewed within the rubric of a 'clash of civilisations' between 'dar al-Islam' and the now dominant Christian–Western world. Bernard Lewis had suggested this in 1990, but it was Samuel Huntington who in 1993 popularised the theme in arguing that conflict between civilisations is likely to replace ideological and other forms of conflict.[12] And it is not just Western commentators who have been making such arguments. Note the words of a prominent

Tunisian lawyer (Abdelwahab Belhawi), which were uttered well before Huntington's warning of a clash of civilisations had become public. 'Colonialism tried to deform all the cultural traditions of Islam', said Belhawi, 'I am not an Islamist. I don't think there is a conflict between religions. There is a conflict between civilizations.'[13] This line of reasoning could lead to the conclusion that the main conflicts of the twenty-first century will more than likely be between the 'West and the rest', between Islam and the West. In Huntington's own words; 'The central axis of world politics is and will be the interaction of Western power and culture with the power and culture of non-Western societies.'[14]

The fourth school, informed by attentive observation of the Islamist forces, regards radical Islam as a new and 'authentic' force for positive change in the Muslim world.[15] The slogan 'Islam is the solution' is heard across the Middle East and North Africa, particularly in those countries where the Islamists have been engaged in challenging the ruling regimes (Algeria and Egypt), as well as in those where Islamic groups have been able to use the political process to advance their own cause (as in Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Turkey and Yemen). Part of the evidence for the 'Islam is the solution' thesis stems from the electoral successes that Islamist parties and groups have enjoyed in the period since 1989.[16] Their electoral successes are taken by some as evidence of their strength as authentic and accepted political forces; their electoral failures are pointed to by others as evidence of their inability to deliver on their message.[17]

The final perspective roundly rejects Huntington's clash of civilisations thesis, but it also refutes the view that the Islamists possess the potential to deliver an alternative to the status quo. There are several strands to this perspective. The first challenges the Islamists' ability to make a lasting impression on the Middle East or beyond. One critic speaks of the 'failure of political Islam' to bring about any fundamental or lasting change to the existing order in Muslim societies: 'the influence of Islamism is more superficial than it seems', suggests Roy.[18] He has further argued that despite their ability to carry out spectacular attacks, Sunni fundamentalist movements 'are largely disconnected from the real strategic issues of the Muslim world'.[19]

Even the 'cataclysm' of 11 September, notes Kepel, 'was a desperate symbol of the isolation, fragmentation, and decline of the Islamist movement, not a sign of its strength and irrepressible might'.[20] The argument that the tide of militancy was cresting, and that the Islamists' power was on the wane and the extremists on the defensive, has been made by others too.[21] Another strand of this school based its arguments around the idea that the Islamic threat itself was largely misunderstood. The challenge of the Islamists has been much more benign than appreciated. It 'need not always result in a threat to regional stability or Western interests'.[22] These arguments used by the above authors are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, several of these perspectives do borrow from each other, and many of the ideas that they advance are products

of intensive cross-pollination.[23] But, in terms of contextualising the forces of radical Islam they do offer different analyses, perspectives and approaches.

In the last analysis, though, to understand Islam as a force in international politics, to be able to evaluate its impact on international affairs, to accurately assess its place in international relations, we must first unravel the ways in which Islam, the world's fastest growing monotheistic religion, has become politicised, and has been deployed as a political tool in the hands of political actors who use Islam as their political ideology.[24]

Political Islam and international politics

This method of analysis has been clear since at least the Iranian revolution of 1979. Then, Iran's clerical establishment captured state power and set about creating the modern era's first revolutionary Islamist state founded on religious doctrines. The Iranian state became the first embodiment, the first Islamist-regime prisoner of the logic of the state. Indeed, it became prisoner of the tensions between a secular system of sovereign states and its associated web of international relations and its own religious-driven interpretation of international politics, including the global power system and the wider inter-state system of relations.[25] Furthermore, the argument that to understand political Islam one must first attempt an understanding of the politics of Muslim states and societies themselves has also forcefully been made. Indeed, this had been done well before even the Islamic Republic of Iran's own masterplan for an 'Islamic' approach to international relations in general and to foreign policy in particular, had begun to take shape.[26]

In this light, an analysis has to begin with an examination of the re-emergence of Islam as a socio-political force in the modern world.[27] In the second instance one must identify the causes of the tensions between the forces of political Islam and the dominant forces of the contemporary (economic and political) international system. In this regard, we must explore the inevitable linkages which tend to tie the domestic realm of Islam to the external, output side of the equation. To put it more simply, we need to identify the links, in terms of encounters, which have developed between political Islam at home and the prevailing a-religious and hierarchical international system, as a basis of our analysis. Such links do exist and have existed for some time. But as 11 September and subsequent developments show, these encounters have become more complex, interdependent, and explosive with each passing year. The tensions now besetting relations between political Islam and the Western-dominated international system seem to have their roots in a fairly brief period in history, that is to say from the victory of the Iranian Islamic revolution in 1979 to the rise of radical Islamist movements in Lebanon and elsewhere in the Levant in the early 1980s. The combined strength of this new Islamist force broke the prevailing mould of state–society relations which periodically had been challenged as far back as 1928 by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and other like-minded groups in British India in the

1930s and 1940s. But in mounting a serious, sustained and radical challenge to the status quo, the 'modern' Islamist forces have sought to weaken and eventually destroy the foundations of the dominant ruling and secular elites in the Middle East region, in the process presenting and posing a challenge to their Western sponsors as well.

The most pertinent example of such a transnational Islamist challenge brewing in the Arab world took the route of an indirect, but nonetheless potentially devastating, attack on the West, which manifested itself in the public assassination of Egypt's pro-Western leader, President Anwar al-Sadat in 1981. By the end of the twentieth century, however, the indirect had given way to direct attacks on the leading Western power, the United States. Let us recall that the first Islamist terrorist attack on US soil dates back to 1993 with the car bomb attack on the World Trade Center complex in Manhattan. Later, the confrontation came through attacks on a set of carefully selected American targets outside of the United States – embassies in east Africa, a naval vessel off the coast of Yemen – and eventually gave way to a direct and devastating attack on American soil itself – the violent events of 11 September 2001. These events transformed the strategic landscape, from what had essentially been a set of isolated incidences of confrontation between the United States and its Islamist detractors, into a truly global confrontation between a shadowy terrorist network around the al-Qaeda organisation and Washington's own equally shadowy 'war on terrorism'.

In the light of developments since 11 September, therefore, it is not too far-fetched to suggest that well into the twenty-first century we shall in all probability have to live with a long and protracted, but albeit irregular, campaign of violence between the forces of militant Islam and the West (notably the United States). In terms of intensity the 'war' will be patchy but it will likely have a deep and corrosive effect on relations between the Muslim world and the West in general, and on the United States and the Muslim-dominated regional systems such as the Middle East and North Africa, Central Asia and Southeast Asia in particular.

Looking back, it emerges that at several important junctures – from the fall of the Shah in 1979 to Hezbollah's suicide bombings of the American and French military barracks in Lebanon in 1982; the forced Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 and the end of the Cold War in 1990; and the suicide attacks of 11 September – violent acts have brought to global attention the potency of political Islam as a transnational force capable of disrupting, though not necessarily changing, the normal flow of international currents across nations and between states. At each juncture these acts have hardened the artery of international relations, and widened in the process the circle of conflict.

It would, however, be too simplistic to see the multitude of international tensions arising from the politicisation of Islam merely in Islamic–Western terms. That this should not be so is evident from two sets of considerations. First, much of the venom of radical Islam is still injected into the Muslim

world itself, where considerable violence is traded amongst Muslims themselves, as it were. As has been noted, 'the "neo–fundamentalism" espoused by transnational networks such as al-Qaeda is first and foremost designed to destabilise the Arab regimes in the Middle East against the background of contemporary "Muslim" politics'.[28] Targets remain local and to a large degree the Islamists are still engaged in daily battles being fought within the community of Muslim states and peoples.

Second, militant Islam takes as much pleasure in confronting such non-Western powers as Russia, China, India, Burma and the Philippines as it does their Western counterparts. Broadly speaking, in the worldview of militant Islamists, Muslims are victims of aggression from a multitude of sources, which includes the Eastern Churches, Hindu and Buddhist movements as well as all secular forces around the world. Militant Islam thus operates in a world of intra-civilisational clashes rather than an inter-civilisational one. It engages in battles with Muslims within the Muslim world itself, with outsiders at the nodes of contact with the Muslim world, as well as increasingly with non-Muslims on their home turf. Political Islam's intra-territorial growth therefore constitutes one of the most important evolutionary features of this ideology.

To better grasp the rise of political Islam in its current form it is best to revisit the immediate events which are usually associated with its prominence following the fairly long 'incubation' period it enjoyed during the birth of the geographically distinct nation-states of the Muslim world in the post-war period. The key events are expertly summed up by Dawisha, who states that:

> The revolution in Iran, the Muslim virulent resistance to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the assassination of Egypt's President Sadat by an Islamic fundamentalist group, the attempted takeover of the Grand Mosque in Mecca, and the clear Islamic dimensions and manifestations of the Iran–Iraq war were some of the more dramatic events that focused the world's attention on Islam as a potent agent of domestic transformation and international change.[29]

As is evident from its rise, political Islam has found it particularly hard to compromise the Muslim world, what it regards to be the Muslim 'region' in political economy terms, to global pressures befalling all other actors in the international system. It has resisted outside pressures and has opposed what it sees as the exploitation, fragmentation and domination of 'the region of Islam' or 'Muslim region' by the West.[30] From Khomeini to bin Laden, the concern about the integrity of the Muslim region has provided the most vital stimulant for trans-boundary international action. What Islamists of the modern era have demonstrated is an acute 'spatial awareness', to borrow from the language of geography, and the more pressure globalisation has exerted on the Muslim region the more significant has become the role of the Muslim periphery in shaping the politics of the Muslim centre (that is to say the

Middle East region) in Muslim politics.[31] In effect, Islam's 'bloody border-lands', to borrow Huntington's phrase, today dangerously interact with the heartland, to the detriment of stability in both.

Political Islam in action

Nonetheless, it is not surprising to hear the often repeated view that one of the main elements of the post-Cold War conflict lies in the struggle between militant Islam originating in the Middle East region and the Western-dominated international system led by the United States and subscribed to by the West's allies in the Middle East. By the late 1980s, in fact, the 'Green Menace' had forcibly but almost inconspicuously emerged to take the place of the 'Red Menace' in the Western discourse. Although most of the world's 1.1 billion Muslims live outside of the MENA region, and not every person living in the Muslim Middle East is in fact a Muslim, the politicisation of Islam is perhaps most evident in this region. Not exclusively, however, as recent examples from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Nigeria and Kenya suggest a widening pattern. Islam, therefore, does not have just one voice in today's complex world, nor is political Islam a monolithic force. Contrary to the public image of Islamists in the popular media, the radical Islamist groups are not Soviet-type Leninist parties reincarnated, despite the fact that extensive links do indeed exist between individuals and some groups (like the Muslim Brotherhood and the al-Qaeda) across the Arab and Muslim worlds.

Actually, the very term 'political Islam' is itself shorthand for a diverse set of opinions, where the Islamic groups themselves have many fundamental differences with each other. These movements do not represent a single political force – neither at home nor internationally. Furthermore, we can discern that Islamists are still split doctrinally between those adhering to the majority sect of Islam (Sunnis) and the minority 16 per cent of Shi'is. Although, in terms of tactical planning and political campaigns it may increasingly be possible to find individuals and groups who can comfortably straddle the two main streams of the faith. So, if for analytical purposes we take the term Islamic fundamentalism to mean the emotional, spiritual, political responses of some Muslims to an acute (and ongoing) set of social, economic and political problems which have gripped the Muslim Middle East, we can then separately define political Islam to indicate the Islamists' desire, political programme, and their political and military action plan to establish an Islamic order.[32]

In this context, one may well be able to identify in the realm of political Islam the early shoots of a regional-wide 'pax Islamica' in the Middle East and North Africa, despite the fact that the eyes of most Islamists have remained fixed on attaining state power in their own countries. As will be shown, however, Western countries and their commercial flagships have been singled out for sustained criticism and attack by the so-called fundamentalists as well, for

they collectively represent the danger of wholesale 'Westernisation' of local cultures and direct Western intervention in Islam's spiritual heartland. So, although the two terms have increasingly come to be used interchangeably, and tend to refer to the same phenomenon, it is important for empirical and methodological reasons that we draw an unambiguous distinction between them and also try and apply the terms more rigorously. Jansen suggests that 'Islamic fundamentalism is both fully politics and fully religion',[33] enjoying a dual identity. The 'duality' in nature that he identifies is a highly explosive mixture, however, for it enables the Islamists on the one hand to use religious authority to challenge the legitimacy of Muslim rulers and established Islamic hierarchies, and, on the other, to adopt the secular political discourse and methods with which they can shake the main pillars on which the modern world has been built, and in which so many of our lives are rooted. In this fashion, Islamists are acquiring a particularly long arm, with which they can reach the elite as comfortably as reaching the masses.

As is evident from above, at its core political Islam's agenda is simple: to return Muslims to the 'golden age of Islam'. But as it tries to do so it comes into direct conflict with the prevailing state system, which is itself embedded in a regional order operating within the wider international structure.[34]

In terms of Muslim politics today, which is by definition transnational, Eickelman and Piscatori suggest that both individuals and their societies' point of reference is rapidly changing, causing dislocation and confusion. As Islamists 'struggle to make sense of the global processes of rapid social, economic, political, and technological change', they note, 'standard conceptual maps of the social and political world become obsolete and the necessity of new guide-posts obvious'.[35] In the more laissez-faire context of globalisation and the post-Cold War international 'dis-order', and in the absence of the discipline of superpower multi-state bloc politics, international stability is increasingly exposed to the dangers of micro-international political or socioeconomic processes. With regard to Islamist politics in this new international environment, not only have they tried to fill the conceptual vacuum created by the end of the Cold War by mapping their own bifocal reality, in which a separation is envisioned between the Muslim region and the West, but they have at the same time taken full advantage of the broken Cold War international structure to extend their logistical and intellectual reach further than ever before. They have deliberately tried to penetrate Muslim territories and societies which were marked off-limits on the superpowers' strategic map of the globe in the twentieth century. Their mixed success in pursuit of this strategy should not put in doubt the seriousness of their intentions.

Geopolitics: the Muslim world in the international system

The Muslim world is a dynamic, non-integrated, rapidly changing and evolving group of mainly Third World states and globally scattered communities, where about one-third of all Muslims are minorities in the countries in which

they live. The Muslim world is a complex world of states and communities whose intricacies can best be illustrated through an examination of its geographical, political, economic and cultural diversities. When viewed through this prism, it seems a disunited set of entities within which pan-Islamism holds little water.

The Muslim world is spread across the three continents of Europe, Africa and Asia, with sizeable Muslim communities in the Americas, India and China. The Middle East region and Southeast Asia form the heartlands of this faith; Saudi Arabia is the birthplace of Islam, and Indonesia the most populous Muslim country (with around 90 per cent of its 188 million people being Muslim). The geography of the faith, however, has been experiencing some changes in recent years. The emergence of a Muslim-dominated Bosnian entity in former Yugoslavia and the regeneration of Muslim Albania in southern Europe are recent additions to what has been Turkey's lonely spot in Europe as the continent's only Muslim state. These states' collective European presence is already being felt in inter-state and inter-communal relations in the Crimea, the Balkans and eastern Mediterranean regions. Much of it discouragingly negative, unfortunately.

Further east though, the emergence of Muslim republics in the Caucasus and Central Asia has practically transformed the map of west Asia. Five new Central Asian republics have been joined by Azerbaijan in the Caucasus. These states are not Muslim in the classic sense of the word, where Islam would be the dominant cultural influence. Culturally and linguistically these states have been permeated by Slavic influences, and are in any case much more in tune with secularist Turkey and still far removed from the traditionalist Islamic forces in the Arab world. But their emergence does represent an expansion (or more precisely recovery of Muslim territory from Orthodox Christendom) of the Muslim world in geographical terms, and in terms of a quantitative growth in the number of independent Muslim states operating in the international system. This fact can be ascertained by the growing number of member-state participants at the organisation of Islamic countries' meetings.

The birth of these six new states and the addition of their 70 million people to the Muslim world will, in the fullness of time, begin to have an impact on the direction and policies pursued by the established Muslim states. Their presence will also influence the orientation and ethos of such hitherto Arab-dominated international Muslim organisations as the 54-member Islamic Conference Organization.

Another important feature of the geographical expansion of the Muslim world in the 1990s is that it was almost exclusively taking place outside of the Arab world. The new Muslim entities are all non-Arab states, and the only notable geographic change in the Arab world stems from the establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization's control over a small part of the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories.

The expansion of the Muslim world outside of the Arab network of states is already creating new opportunities for co-operation among the non-Arab

Muslim actors of the Middle East. The expansion of the Economic Co-opera-tion Organization (ECO) by its founding members (Iran, Pakistan and Turkey) in the early 1990s to incorporate all of the independent Muslim republics of the former Soviet Union plus Afghanistan shows this trend well. This new economic-oriented organisation, comprising ten members, is the largest regional organisation in Asia. It boasts over 300 million people within its huge geographical space, and bountiful natural resources. The ECO's terri-tory holds much water and agricultural land, as well as hydrocarbons deposits, gold, lead, zinc, coal, copper and uranium, amongst others. At the very least, ECO possesses the material basis for economic development in west Asia.

Equally diverse are the political structures of Muslim states. The popu-larised image of the political systems of the Muslim world as being authoritarian fiefdoms does not do justice to the complex realities of political organisation in Muslim societies. Several Muslim leaders, for instance, iden-tify themselves as believers and actively incorporate the tenets of Islam into their policies. In the pro-Western monarchies of Morocco, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, the kings of these countries weave their families' histories closely with that of the Prophet's and his ancient tribe. In Iran, the spiritual leader of the republic, Ayatollah Khamenei, is a senior Shia cleric whose black turban is supposed to indicate direct line of descent from the Prophet's family. In Afghanistan, the Taliban leadership, which was a 'student movement' of sorts, enjoyed the fruits of office precisely because it claimed to have the right Islamic credentials for governance. Its successor republican regime must pre-sent itself in Islamic terms to gain acceptance in this deeply traditional society.

Muslim states, therefore, are highly dynamic entities, many of which con-stitute core components of key strategic regions in the international system, such as the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Central Asia. As they do not form a single force in the international system they inevitably find themselves bunched together at certain junctures, giving the impression of unity. At other times they appear rather strung out and disunited. But the fact that they are *different* types of states has to be underlined.

So, in providing a yardstick for understanding the political structures of the Muslim world, I propose to use a framework which divides political organisation in the Muslim world into four broad categories, these being:

- the traditionalist monarchical Muslim states;
- the modernist Muslim states;
- the revolutionary Muslim states; and
- the secularist Muslim states.[36]

Muslim peoples therefore are governed by very different and indeed compet-ing political systems. In some instances, though, the term government should be used very loosely indeed, as central authority is evidently giving way to

more localised forms of administration. Somalia and Afghanistan are the most extreme examples of this trend, which is also in evidence in Chad, the Sudan, Yemen and parts of Pakistan. The diverse nature of the political systems in the Muslim world moreover actually adversely affects their relations with one another as well. Today, though, with the ever-present effects of a single super-power dominating our unipolar world, these differences tend to feed more directly into the policy analysis of Muslim states about each other, as much as about the West. This problem is nowhere more evident than in the Muslim Middle East, where radical secularist regimes and radical Islamist regimes have for a decade or more been trying to co-exist with the traditionalist monarchies of the region. The problem of incompatibility, in terms of inter-national politics, is even larger than this. It is, at times, one of deep-seated disputes and violent confrontations. Iran's open quarrels with Saudi Arabia in the 1980s and with the Taliban in Afghanistan in the 1990s on religious grounds provide just two examples of how even essentially religious differ-ences can acquire a geopolitical and geo-cultural life of their own in the context of inter-Muslim relations and develop into security challenges for the parties concerned. The religious dimension is one example of an even broader problem which is demonstrated by a brief glance at the 1990s decade, when Muslim Iraq invaded and attempted to annex Muslim Kuwait; Muslim Sudan confronted Muslim Egypt; Muslim Saudi Arabia engaged in a pro-tracted border dispute with Muslim Yemen; Muslim Iran forcefully rejected the credentials of revolutionary Muslims of Afghanistan; and Muslim Syria engaged in high politics in fear of being overshadowed by its larger neigh-bour, Muslim Turkey.

As one looks around the Muslim region, therefore, one finds that there is no one political system prevailing in the Muslim world, nor indeed is there harmony amongst these states. One finds on the political map of the Muslim world modernising and fast-developing Muslim regimes (like Malaysia, Indonesia and Turkey), some of which function as authoritarian regimes, co-habiting with secular (Central Asian states, Algeria, Egypt, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey), Islamist (Afghanistan, Iran, Sudan) republican regimes, 'moderate' regimes (like Pakistan), and Islamic monarchies whose external policies may be non-confrontational but whose domestic realms conform to traditional Islamic norms. Within each of these categories, moreover, one can spot a range of differences, amongst both the traditionalist and modernist regimes. They co-habit, and interact. But they do so first and foremost as members of a much wider international community.

Economically, too, the differences between Muslim states is quite marked. The newly industrialising Muslim countries, for instance, are spearheading part of the Third World challenge to Western domination of the capitalist world economy. Muslim states in this category include Tunisia, Morocco and Turkey in the Middle East and North Africa, and Malaysia, Indonesia and possibly Pakistan in Asia. Then there are two other types of economic states in the Muslim world: the survivor or the 'make do',

economy – which is the prevalent form in much of Muslim Africa – and the stagnant or under-performing Muslim economies, the latter being characteristic of some of the Arab world's economies. Accounting for more than a dozen Muslim states and many millions of Muslims in Asia and Africa, these groups of countries either suffer from a natural resource deficiency, or else find that their economies are unable to respond to the multitude of pressures which are increasingly generated at the global level. They simply do not have the means to assess, let alone respond to, the challenges that a globalised international system poses. Tragically, in most of these cases, poverty continues to prevail, despite a liberalisation and opening up of their economies. A number of other Muslim economies, on the other hand, have been doing quite well out of the systematic collection of 'rent'. By and large these economies have prospered because they have been blessed with huge hydrocarbon deposits, which was the main source of their wealth and income in the twentieth century, and will likely be in the next century as well. Furthermore, the ranks of the Middle Eastern oil states have been expanded in the 1990s by the gradual arrival on the international hydrocarbons scene of potentially serious players such as Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. The combined reserves of Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, for example, are said to exceed 50 billion barrels of oil, or could even be as great as 200 billion barrels. Such reserve figures will mean many billions of dollars in revenues, and may indeed herald a new oil bonanza in another Muslim-dominated geographical zone.

Not surprisingly, therefore, several of these new Central Asian states see themselves as leading regional economies of the twenty-first century, with potential to emerge as new 'tigers' of Asia. The economic ambitions of these newly independent states is likely to catapult them to prominence as some of the next century's main hydrocarbons providers. But their arrival as large hydrocarbon exporters may bring them into a devastating competition with the established Middle Eastern hydrocarbons exporters, all of whom are, of course, Muslim states.

Geo-culture: Muslim states and globalisation

Although the contemporary world may be regarded as being more open and 'pluralistic', with minimum boundaries, it is also politically, economically and technologically more divided and differentiated. In the new global economic order the forces of change are all-powerful, and the nation-state's apparently insurmountable problems are mirrored in the increasingly violent challenges it faces from minorities as well as those groups who find themselves (or think that they are) disenfranchised or neglected. In this brave new world, 'globalisation' of capital (spearheaded by giant Western corporations and their brands) can be argued to be responsible for some of the problems associated with dislocation and the deepening of social crises in the developing world.

The cultural battles between Western companies and their brand names on the one hand, and Muslim consumers and their governments on the other, is one example of the impact that the capitalisation process has been having on the Muslim world. But local capitalist forces which have to be attuned to the forces of globalisation for growth have also been caught off-guard by the many irreversible developments which have accompanied this powerful agent for change. One can draw attention, for example, to the ways in which market forces have caused alienation and accelerated rural to urban migration (which in turn has intensified cultural dislocation). Today, great Muslim metropoles – Cairo, Istanbul, Karachi, Tehran – all bear the scars of rapid labour migration from the countryside to the city, and endure the tensions which surface on a daily basis between city authorities and the often destitute labourers who find themselves cut off from family, without work, and a long way from the social safety net that used to give them security in their hour of need. Such shantytown neighbourhoods, as have sprung up around every Muslim metropole, provide a deep reservoir of supporters for Islamists of all hues. In such circumstances, one can argue that alienation is an absolute problem, as it in fact causes almost complete separation of the labour migrant from the social setting that predominates the city. Alienation as a social problem also touches those in work, thus affecting even more lives than the millions of shantytown dwellers. It causes problems in the workplace, where the process of work tends to lose its purpose for many employees, and where traditional values and customs are constantly challenged. Such apparently mundane issues as proximity of sexes in the workplace acquire explosive undertones.

Also, it is evident that capitalist production bombards and eventually fractures socially and economically supportive extended family units. Such units are vital to the renewal of Muslim cultural values – and are seen by many Muslims as the central plank in their fight against moral degradation. Capitalist production, which is now the predominant mode of production in the Muslim world as elsewhere, does not require extended families or their influence. Training the next generation and preparing other members of the family for engaging in the same profession, or for tilling the land, is no longer a function that an extended family network can usefully undertake. A typical employer today would, of necessity, require suitable individuals to employ and will have no interest in the rest of the individual's family. Training, if required, will be done by the firm itself or by another agency on its behalf. Extended family relations have no place in a world where employees are the total sum of single units. In search of work, individuals are forced to leave behind not only their traditions but also their families. The socialising function of extended family structures, moreover, is also lost. Vital customs and value systems tend to be mutated or fail to be transmitted at all, while new (often imported) habits are acquired and internalised. With such forces in evidence across the Muslim world, the Islamists' argument that the Western-dominated global capitalist order is not only an enemy of the Muslim but also of his family falls on receptive ears, echoing the fears of

countless Muslims across the continents who share at least two realities wherever they may be: their faith and the endless search for their daily bread. The radical Islamists' mastery of making a weapon of the former to deal with the demoralising effects of the latter is often overlooked in analyses which tend to focus on the political at the expense of the socio-economic. It is largely in this realm that the Islamists display their deep roots in Muslim societies and, through their vast reservoir of empathy, their ability to reach the average Muslim anywhere on the planet. But in reality theirs is a knee-jerk reaction to a clash between cultural values and economic necessities.

In more general terms, capitalist expansion has also brought with it Western models of organisation, management and progress indices. In essence, these are all value systems designed to measure success, efficiency and achievement. These indices and models have little or no regard for traditions and cultural norms. They work, their proponents argue, precisely because they are 'scientific'; they work for they are universal and a-cultural. But, in the last analysis, the adoption of such measures of development do cause change in social relations and values, which is not only sometimes unwarranted but rather destabilising. In the context of the Muslim world, moreover, where social justice is important and where an alternative, albeit imperfect, set of rules for conducting economic activity already exists, using only the Western criteria and models can at critical times cause a social and political backlash. Evidence of such a backlash occurring can be found in the violent and uncompromising responses of Muslims in both Asia and Africa. Not surprisingly, Islamists in these countries set out to fish in troubled waters and blame their own elites' blind following of the West for their countries' failures.

At the international level, moreover, capitalism introduces and feeds divisive forces which arise from economic competition and rivalries (in trade, investment and production for example) among the Muslim states. In open, globalised markets, therefore, it is not only Muslim states which compete against each other but also their workforces. While expressing sympathy for the plight of other Muslims, one wonders how many Muslims are also aware of the damage that their own economic activities may be inflicting on their fellow-Muslims – now their economic rivals. Such competitive forces are naturally generated by capitalism, causing atomisation of the economic potential of Muslims, states and individuals. But also by pulling them into quite distinct, and ultimately separate, regional markets and organisations, the world economy also separates the resources of Muslim countries from one another.[37] Furthermore, while a desire for Islamic unity has come to represent an alternative model to the colonial division of the Muslim Middle East into separate political and economic entities, this same desire has brought into sharp focus the tensions which have arisen in recent years between individual rights and collective duties, as well as between the Muslim peoples' responsibilities to their faith on the one hand, and their country on the other. Where such tensions are strong, the struggle of the Islamists against the state has caused

direct threats to the legitimacy of the state itself, and indeed to its very right to exist. To take this argument to its next logical step, what we find is that in effect the Islamists have, through their actions, been challenging the basis of the existing international system – the system of territorial-based states. This tension provides a further explanation for their difficult relationship with the West and international institutions, the very proponents and protectors of international relations in a system of independent states.

The irony of the current situation lies in this: having gained autonomy of action from the colonial powers and having secured sovereignty and independence of the nation's territory, the Muslim state now finds itself under attack not only by the forces of transnational political Islam, but also by the very forces which are shaping the international system – the forces of globalisation. No sooner had the state gathered the resources to check the power of the Islamists at home, it had to find new ways of containing the overwhelming power of globalisation, which directly and simultaneously challenged both the territoriality of the state as well as its functional arena. By actively delegitimising the state (as it is forced to forgo its traditional role of social provider), Western patterns of development – privatisation of core economic sectors, liberalisation of trade and economic relations, etc. – have in fact sown the seeds of instability in the Muslim world.

The widening technological gap, a worsening food security and the dependence of Muslim countries on the efficient food producers of the world – who are of course in the West – have added to the deep sense of insecurity arising from the global changes in the Muslim world. In the Middle East the long-term impact of the globalisation process has been the conversion of the Arab world into a net consumer market for Western products, production techniques and labour–capital relations. These states have in effect been reduced into the suppliers of cheap labour for international producers and relatively cheap strategic inputs (i.e. hydrocarbons) for international consumers.

To make matters worse for the Arab state, adoption of production techniques from the West has entailed accepting the decentralising force of globalisation – in that they cannot be controlled centrally. Arab states are realising that the adoption of modern capitalism's production techniques is itself centrifugal, running the risk of undermining the ruling elite's grip on society, and weakening the bureaucracy's control of the national economy. In circumstances where globalisation is causing cultural dislocation as well it is not hard to see why salvation for many appears only be found in the safety of the all-encompassing faith that Islam is. After all, if Islam is a whole way of life and part of the very fabric of Muslim societies – which it is – then it stands to reason that attempts to preserve it from the vagaries of international capitalism will necessarily bring it into open battle with those who act as vanguards of the system. Today, it is the radical Islamists who occupy the mantle of opposition to global capitalism. They oppose, though maybe not in these clear terms, the very being and logic, let alone behaviour and culture, of what constitutes the capturing of new markets and profiting from efficient

production and exchange of goods and services worldwide. In political economy terms, the Islamists' response to globalisation and cultural homogenisation is no more than a deep desire to preserve the roots of a distinct worldview. From their perspective, they are having to fight for *indigenisation* in the face of deepening globalisation and 'standardisation'. They feel besieged and see their mission as remaining engaged in an ongoing fight for global diversity.

Junctions of conflict

Despite their many differences, however, the vital point is that all Muslim states are part of the same international capitalist division of labour, and exist and function within this same global order. Drives at creating a Muslim economic common market have been made, most recently through the establishment of D-8 Group of some of the largest Muslim economies, but in the absence of solid economic and political foundations such groupings will be unable to forge a uniquely Muslim international division of labour. Without such a centralising force, however, efforts to create this alternative division of labour are unlikely to succeed. Today, the dual binding threads of religion and history are too loose to help attach this multitude of states and communities together. Divided, they shall continue to fall prey to the more dominant powers ever present on their doorsteps.

Two examples suffice for showing the absence of a 'Muslim' approach to international politics: reactions to the Western intervention in Afghanistan after the 11 September tragedies, and the military campaign in Iraq in 2003 after the failure of the UN inspectors to fully disarm the Iraqi regime of its alleged weapons of mass destruction in a relatively short period of time between autumn 2002 and winter 2003. The first observation to make is that of the clear divisions which have characterised reactions to these two critical campaigns waged by the West on Muslim soil. With regard to the former, it is noteworthy that within three months of 11 September, the core sponsor of the Taliban regime, namely Pakistan, emerged as one of the United States' main allies in its war against terrorism in Afghanistan. Islamabad, which had been the 'godfather' of the Taliban, was recruited in late 2001 as a Western military and security partner in the fight against al-Qaeda and its Taliban sponsor. Many other Muslim states condemned the US-led military campaign in Afghanistan but provided no alternative solution to the security dilemmas posed by the Taliban and al-Qaeda duo in Afghanistan. Furthermore, the involvement of Pakistan in the anti-Taliban campaign weakened the basis for an even symbolic Muslim response, let alone a practical one. Thus, the US and its allies have had a relatively free hand in shaping the destiny of a geopolitically important Muslim country which not only sits between two of the Muslim world's largest non-Arab states, Iran and Pakistan, but also provides a window for that world onto the relatively unstable Muslim-dominated region of Central Asia.

The second example, the Anglo-American military invasion of Muslim Iraq, further highlights the depth of divisions amongst the Muslim states, but also the greater importance they accorded to the crisis in Iraq. Although most Muslim states did condemn the war on Iraq as unwarranted, illegal, and meddling in the internal affairs of another country, none were able to block the attack, blunt the military instruments of war, divert energies towards a speedy resolution of the conflict, or provide a security package in time to meet the United States' minimum demands. Although Washington and London were heavily criticised for unleashing their formidable military forces prematurely on Iraq, it is important to note that the US 'coalition of the willing' of over forty countries in this campaign did include several Muslim states.

Box 1: Participants in the 2003 'Coalition of the Willing'

The Americas: United States, Colombia, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, Honduras, Panama.

Europe: Britain, Spain, Poland, Romania, Czech Republic, Portugal, Denmark, Netherlands, Hungary, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Macedonia, Georgia, Iceland.

Muslim world: Kuwait, Albania, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Uganda, Uzbekistan.

Australasia: Australia, Japan, South Korea, Philippines, Singapore, Mongolia, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Palau.

Africa: Ethiopia, Rwanda.

In addition to the above seven Muslim members of the anti-Iraq coalition, there were a further few that played an instrumental role in providing logistical, operational or other covert support for the coalition. In their ranks one could find Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, Pakistan and Turkey. This list of at least fifteen Muslim countries associated with the coalition included core Arab countries, some of the largest in terms of population (Pakistan and Turkey), and several important oil states.[38] The second observation, therefore, is that in pursuit of national or other interests Muslim states have often had to compromise their Islamic ideals for a narrower set of objectives. Such pragmatic decisions have also led to the deepening of divisions. A divided Muslim world makes it easier for the Muslim states themselves as well as their non-Muslim allies to forge close politico-military or security partnerships.

Third, the point has to be made that for all its diversity, as a consequence of its geographic spread, strategic and geopolitical depth and complexity, and economic riches, the Muslim world has come to occupy an even more central role in the international system than it had during the Cold War. At every

juncture in the Muslim world since the liberation of Afghanistan in 1989 from Soviet occupation, radical Islamists have come face to face with the US-led West. The more extensive and intensive Muslim world encounters with the West have become, the more room has been created for the Islamists to drive their message of opposition home to their fellow Muslims: 'The US invasion of Iraq is a complete gift to the Islamist parties. People who would otherwise turn their noses up at them are now flocking to their banner'.[39] The 2003 war in Iraq was the most recent along a long road of violent encounters with the West that political Islam has exploited to spread its message of Jihad.[40] From the long-running bloody struggle of the Palestinian people for independence, now perhaps the modern world's longest national liberation struggle, to the neglect of Somalia after heavy involvement, to the occupation of Afghanistan, the extensive military presence of the West in the Persian Gulf and Central Asian regions, and finally what many fundamentalists call the 'cultural invasion' of the Muslim world, radical Islamists appeal to the sense of injustice felt by countless Muslims to argue that the US-led West's main agenda is to destroy Islam and to dominate the Muslim world.

They thus challenge the United States and its allies in their attempts to shape the international agenda, and through questioning their motives by drawing on the deep reservoir of Muslim resentments of perceived Western double standards in dealing with Muslim-related issues, attempt a de-legitimisation of the West's efforts, and of ruling elites in the Muslim world. Al-Qaeda, for example, used to great effect evidence of the almost permanent Western military presence in or around Muslim regions.

Political Islam adopts a selective memory strategy, however, in its strategic game plan against the West, which Muslim regimes, through inertia if not the absence of viable alternatives from within, tend to endorse. So, in this situation the Afghanistan campaign ended up being portrayed as an anti-Islamic act, even though it liberated the people of Afghanistan from a barbaric and backward regime which by the reckoning of most Muslims was a slur on the name and reputation of Islam. The West's role in ultimately saving the Muslim heritage and political structures of Kosovo and Bosnia–Herzegovina, or its active condemnation of Russian military acts against the Chechens, are treated with such scepticism and disdain as to question their moral virtue and render them worthless and empty gestures designed to cloud the West's greater designs on Islam. As far as political Islam is concerned, nothing that the US and its allies can do can buy them credit. In all this the Arab states appear impotent and incapacitated.[41]

The 'golden age' syndrome: advocates of early Islam confront the New Rome

The world, thus, has indeed entered a new age since the ascendancy of the neo-conservative global vision in the United States in the new millennium. In this new world order, the 'neo-cons' find themselves lined up against the

neo-fundamentalist forces of political Islam who look to the 'golden age of Islam' for reserve and inspiration. The two sides, adopting the crude tools of old missionaries, seem to relish the confrontation. In practice, the broad American neo-conservative agenda for global change has galvanised its opponents, from France and China to political Islam, into action. As a consequence, so long as the forces of radical Islam interpret every American act as hostile and an attack on Islam they will rally against it, inevitably plotting a violent response. The cycle of violence deepens, the more intensive the interactions become between the Muslim world and the political and commercial forces of the West. The image of the United States as the New Rome merely makes it easier for the radical Islamists to justify their own violent acts on the basis of the enemy's threatening grand design.[42] In sum, it is reasonable to suggest that radical Islam has failed to gain state power and has failed in its main mission of 'liberating' Muslim lands from Western influence and convincing the Muslim masses of the virtues of its brand of Jihad. But this is not the same as concluding that political Islam has lost the capacity to act, to remain militant, to undertake sophisticated military-style operations, or to generally pose a serious security challenge to Western interests worldwide.

Furthermore, beneath the rugged international political surface which characterises the post-11 September world order lies another smouldering fire called globalisation, which is itself posing a devastating socio-economic challenge to the Muslim world. Political Islam, therefore, assesses the power of the New Rome not only in terms of its sophisticated firepower and huge military legions but also in terms of its capacity to change the political economy of the Muslim states in its own image. On both fronts, the United States emerges as Islam's main enemy. All the more so when it is so closely allied to the Middle East state of Israel.

In the last analysis, the tensions between radical Islam and the West, which have become a major concern of contemporary world politics, stem from the fact that the former, arguably representing a form of cultural nationalism, is having to respond to the 'process of world-wide Westernisation and …. the means used to "uproot" the planet'.[43] The West, it is seen, is being guided by a new 'civilising mission' – a sense of righteousness which has been strengthened by its moral and political victory over Soviet Communism – and a conviction that the end of the Cold War has heralded the transculturalisation of capitalism. The United States as the champion of the new age is not content simply to globalise capitalism as a mode of production, but aims to export its own brand of it as a set of values, indeed a whole value system.[44] This impression is daily reinforced by interpretations of America's actions, which are not helped by the unfortunate, but increasingly unavoidable, parallels being drawn by most MENA-based commentators about the United States' policies and those pursued by Israel. An associational link between the two has been firmly established, which provides further evidence for the Islamists of the reality of American intentions, and also of the real dangers that the 'American–Zionist conspiracies' pose to Islam and the Muslim world. Thus, of

the 2003 Iraq war one Palestinian Islamist says: 'This is an evil crusader war against Islam … [and] as soon as Muslims can unite, then all these problems of occupation and persecution will end'.[45] Islamic Jihad in Palestine declares during the Iraq war that it intends 'to [intensify] its attacks [on Israeli targets] to make it clear … that what is going on here in Palestine is the same as what is happening in Iraq'.[46] This type of analysis, where a causal link is established between American actions and other attacks on Muslim populations, is more widespread today than it has ever been in the Muslim world. And it has not been helped by the fact that senior American officials tend regularly to make key policy statements about the Middle East region in visibly controversial settings, such as the AIPAC in Washington, which is commonly recognised to be the most powerful pro-Israel lobby in the United States.[47]

A simple equation follows the logic of Islamist thinking: global capitalism equals American domination, and it must be opposed.[48] Radical Islamists, therefore, pose a fundamental challenge to the contemporary global order. To quote two prominent analysts of the Muslim politics scene:

> What is most disturbing about radical Islam from a strategic perspective may well be the potentially explosive interaction of transcendent religious fervour with 'revolutionary' international aims. If correct, this would imply a structural conflict between [radical] Islam and the West, with little prospect of mutual accommodation.[49]

Furthermore, because they violently question the European legacy of a state-based international system, and also the universality of the Western model, they will endeavour to present alternative realities to their flock: 'The logic of Islamism necessitates the provincialisation of the West and its relocation as one centre among many. It is no longer considered to be the cultural formation that all other cultures must attempt to imitate'.[50]

Whether regional and international responses to the Islamist challenge will eventually form the nucleus of a new structure for containing this problem remains to be seen. Some argue that co-optation and accommodation will eradicate the Islamist threat as a combination of these policies will inevitably force the Islamists to change their violent stance against their ruling regimes and the contemporary international system and re-enter peaceful political dialogue. Others maintain that the only way to remove the Islamist threat is to defeat its forces on the battlefield, wherever they happen to challenge the status quo. The faceless forces of globalisation today do not help either, for they tend to distort the image of the enemy to such an extent that little chance of a genuine compromise seems likely. This much is depressingly clear in the aftermath of the 11 September attacks on the United States. Both sides have vowed to continue to final victory. What this means is that ultimately in today's integrated international political economy the prospects of a compromise emerging between the US-led forces of the West and political Islam seem dimmer than they have done for a generation.

Notes

 1 Rosenau (1990).
 2 Ibid. p. 6. A suitable label for this new environment would 'postinternational politics', Rosenau suggests.
 3 Juergensmeyer (1993), p. 2.
 4 Bassam Tibi provides one the clearest outlines of the context for understanding political Islam. See Tibi (2002).
 5 Taji-Farouki (1996), p. 42.
 6 For valuable insights on the intellectual tensions between political Islam and nationalism see Esposito and Voll (2002).
 7 Tripp (1996), p. 67.
 8 Dekmejian (1995).
 9 Taylor (1988), p. 72.
10 Fischer (1982), pp. 101–125.
11 See Sayyid (1997); Husain (1995).
12 Lewis (1990); Huntington (1993) pp. 22–49; Huntington (1997).
13 Walsh (1992), p. 30.
14 Huntington (1995), p. 6.
15 See Huband (1998).
16 For a 10-year analysis of this trend, between 1989 and 1999, see Ehteshami (1999a), pp. 199–217. See also Midlarsky (1998), pp. 485–511.
17 Guazzone (1995).
18 Roy (1994), p. 26.
19 Roy (1998).
20 Kepel (2002), p. 375.
21 Before 11 September the prospects of an Islamic confrontation with the West had also been dismissed. Halliday had made the strong argument that the confrontation between Islam and the West was no more than a 'myth', 'used to legitimise, to mislead, to silence, to mobilise'. Halliday (1995), p. 6.
22 Esposito (1992), p. 211.
23 Anthony Shadid's study typifies this trend: Shadid (2001).
24 Though operating within very different conceptual and analytical frameworks, it is interesting that both Hunter and Brown, for instance, reinforce this same conclusion. See Hunter (1998); Brown (2000).
25 See Esposito (1990); Rezun (1990); and Ehteshami and Varasteh (1991).
26 Piscatori (1983).
27 Husain (1995).
28 A. Adib-Moghaddam (2002), p. 205.
29 Dawisha (1983), p. 1.
30 The term 'Muslim region' is used here to convey a shorthand politico-cultural meaning, implying 'a set of cognitive practices shaped by language and political discourse, which through the creation of concepts, metaphors, analogies, determine how the region is defined'. See Jayasuriya (1994), p. 12.
31 For excellent analysis of the forces shaping political Islam see Eickelman and Piscatori (1996).
32 For a wider context of the definitions of these terms consult some of the following: Esposito (1997); Jansen (1997); Husain (1995); Tibi (2002); Kepel (2002).
33 Jansen (1997), p. 1.
34 George (1996), pp. 71–90.
35 Eickelman and Piscatori (1996), p. 136.
36 See Ehteshami (1999b), pp. 107–121.
37 Beeley (1992), pp. 293–311.
38 For the record, thirteen Muslim countries had joined the Kuwait war coalition of 1990/91.

39 Luce and Bokhari (2003).
40 'Nobody has doubts that U.S. wars in the Middle East are pure Israeli wars, and the U.S. army's occupation of Iraq would be like an Israeli occupation of another Arab land. This is the current image of the United States, and this is the message that reaches the U.S. President', noted A. Hamadeh in *an-Nahar,* 15 March 2003.
41 Ninety-nine Syrians wrote an open letter in March 2003 bemoaning the Arabs' predicament: 'we are very afraid for the future of our Arab nation and its states … as the last two years have proved that we have become completely exposed to any foreign enemy and that our countries have never been in such a state of incapability and weakness. It seems as though we have returned to an epoch that preceded the emergence of our national states'. For details see various issues of *an-Nahar.*
42 Most critics of US foreign policy since 11 September point to the National Security Document published in 2002 as the basis of the neo-conservatives' action plan. This document, read with the George W. Bush administration's other pronouncements, is predicated on guaranteeing and prolonging 'America's moment', American supremacy in the current international system. The strategy is based on preventive and pre-emptive actions to ensure America's leading position. Its essence is captured in three phrases: American pre-emptive strikes, preventive wars, and primacy without constraint.
43 Latouche (1996), p. 72.
44 The concept of transculturalisation implies a process through which the planting in non-Western settings of a culture, which is deeply rooted in western Europe and its associated 'Western heartlands' of the United States and other settler-colonies, is achieved. The end product may be homogenisation of culture under Western economic hegemony. See Featherstone (1990).
45 Devi (2003).
46 *The Guardian,* 1 April 2003.
47 The reference is to Secretary of State Colin Powell's important policy speech at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee on 30 March 2003, at the height of the controversial military campaign in Iraq. He also used this platform to make what were widely seen in the region as undisguised threats againsst two of Iraq's powerful (Muslim) neighbours, Syria and Iran. See *International Herald Tribune,* 31 March and 1 April 2003.
48 An Islamist-leaning newspaper in Egypt stated in an editorial entitled 'The US empire of evil': 'Bush wants the world to be under his feet … while he is living in the 21st century, he is driven by the mentality of the 17th century'. *Al-Wafd,* 16 March 2003.
49 Fuller and Lesser (1995), p. 153.
50 Sayyid (1997), p. 129.

References

Adib-Moghaddam, A. (2002) 'Global Intifadah? September 11th and the Struggle within Islam', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 203–216.

Beeley, B. (1992) 'Islam as a Global Political Force', in A. McGrew and P. Lewis (eds), *Global Politics: Globalization and the Nation-state*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Brown, L. (2000) *Religion and the State: The Muslim Approach to Politics*, New York: Columbia University Press.

Dawisha, A. (1983) 'Islam in Foreign Policy: Some Methodological Issues', in A. Dawisha (ed.), *Islam in Foreign Policy,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1–8.

Dekmejian, R. (1995) *Islam in Revolution: Fundamentalism in the Arab World*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

Devi, S. (2003) 'Battle in Iraq Throws Israel's Divisions into Sharper Focus', *Financial Times*, 31 March.

Ehteshami, A. (1999a) 'Is the Middle East Democratizing?', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 26, no. 2, pp. 199–217.

—— (1999b) 'Globalisation and Political Islam', in K. Fülberg-Stolberg, P. Heidrich, and E. Schöne (eds), *Dissociation and Appropriation: Responses to Globalisation in Asia and Africa*, Berlin: Verlag Das Arabische Buch, pp. 107–121.

—— and Varasteh, M. (eds) (1991) *Iran and the International Community*, London: Routledge.

Eickelman, D. and Piscatori, J. (1996) *Muslim Politics*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Esposito, J. (ed.) (1990) *The Iranian Revolution: Its Global Impact*, Miami: Florida International University Press.

—— (1992) *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

—— (ed.) (1997) *Political Islam: Revolution, Radicalism, or Reform?* Boulder: Lynne Rienner.

—— and Voll, J. (2002) *Makers of Contemporary Islam*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Featherstone, M. (1990) *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalisation and Modernity*, London: Sage.

Fischer, M. (1982) 'Islam and the Revolt of the Petit Bourgeoisie', *Daedalus*, vol. 111, no. 1, pp. 101–125.

Fuller, G. and Lesser, I. (1995) *A Sense of Siege: The Geopolitics of Islam and the West*, Boulder: Westview Press.

George, D. (1996) '*Pax Islamica:* An Alternative New World Order?', in Sidahmed and Ehteshami, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, pp. 71–90.

Guazzone, L. (ed.) (1995) *The Islamist Dilemma: The Political Role of Islamist Movements in the Contemporary Arab World*, Reading: Ithaca Press.

Halliday, F. (1995) *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation: Religion and Politics in the Middle East*, London: I.B. Tauris.

Huband, M. (1998) *Warriors of the Prophet: The Struggle for Islam,* Boulder: Westview Press.

Hunter, S. (1998) *The Future of Islam and the West: Clash of Civilizations or Peaceful Coexistence?* Westport: Praeger.

Huntington, S. (1993) 'The Clash of Civilizations', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 3, pp. 22–49.

—— (1995) 'The Clash of Civilizations?', *Peaceworks*, August, no. 4, pp. 4–6.

—— (1997) *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, London: Simon and Schuster.

Husain, M. (1995) *Global Islamic Politics*, New York: Harper Collins.

Jansen, J. (1997) *The Dual Nature of Islamic Fundamentalism,* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Jayasuriya, K. (1994) 'Singapore: The Politics of Regional Definition', *Pacific Review*, vol. 7, no. 4, pp. 411–420.

Juergensmeyer, M. (1993) *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Kepel, G. (2002) *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Latouche, S. (1996) *The Westernization of the World*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Lewis, B. (1990) 'The Roots of Muslim Rage', *The Atlantic Monthly*, September, www.theatlantic.com/issues/90sep/rage.htm (accessed 15 September 2003).

Luce, E. and Bokhari, F. (2003) 'US Invasion Pushes Pakistani Elite Closer to Hardline Islam, *Financial Times,* 28 March.

Midlarsky, M. (1998) 'Democracy and Islam: Implications for Civilizational Conflict and the Democratic Peace', *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 42, no. 4, pp. 485–511.

Piscatori, J. (ed.) (1983) *Islam in the Political Process*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rezun, M. (ed.) (1990) *Iran at the Crossroads: Global Relations in a Turbulent Decade*, Boulder: Westview Press.

Rosenau, J. (1990) *Turbulence in World Politics: A Theory of Change and Continuity*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Roy, O. (1994) *The Failure of Political Islam*, London: I.B. Tauris.

—— (1998) 'Fundamentalists Without a Common Cause', *Le Monde Diplomatique*, 2 October, www.mondediplo.com/1998/10/04afghan (accessed 15 September 2003).

Sayyid, B. (1997) *A Fundamental Fear: Eurocentrism and the Emergence of Islamism*, London: Zed Books.

Shadid, A. (2001) *Legacy of the Prophet: Despots, Democrats, and the New Politics of Islam*, Boulder: Westview Press.

Taji-Farouki, S. (1996) 'Islamic State Theories and Contemporary Realities', in Sidahmed and Ehteshami (eds), *Islamic Fundamentalism*, Boulder: Westview Press, pp. 35–50.

Taylor, A. (1988) *The Islamic Question in Middle East Politics*, Boulder: Westview Press.

Tibi, B. (2002) *The Challenge of Fundamentalism: Political Islam and the New World Disorder*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Tripp, C. (1996) 'Islam and the Secular Logic of the State in the Middle East', in Sidahmed and Ehteshami (eds), *Islamic Fundamentalism*, Boulder: Westview Press, pp. 51–69.

Walsh, J. (1992) 'The Sword of Islam', *Time*, 15 June.

3 Re-formatting the economy

Islamic banking and finance in world politics

Bill Maurer[1]

Origins

There are twenty invocations of *riba* – literally 'increase', often translated as usury or interest – in the Qur'an. Five verses in particular stand out:[2]

> Those that live on usury [*riba*] shall rise up before God like men whom Satan has demented by his touch; for they claim that trading is no different from usury. But God has permitted trading and made usury unlawful. He that has received an admonition from his Lord and mended his ways may keep his previous gains; God will be his judge. Those that turn back [turn again to *riba*] shall be the inmates of the Fire, wherein they shall abide for ever.
>
> 2:275

> God has laid His curse on usury and blessed almsgiving with increase [*yurbi*, root: RaBa]. God bears no love for the impious and the sinful.
>
> 2:276

> Believers, have fear of God and waive what is still due to you from usury, if your faith be true, or war shall be declared against you by God and his apostle. If you repent, you may retain your principal, suffering no loss and causing loss to none.
>
> 2:278–279

> Believers, do not live on usury, doubling your wealth many times over. Have fear of God, that you may prosper.
>
> 3:130.

> That which you seek to increase by usury will not be blessed by God; but the alms you give for His sake shall be repaid to you many times over.
>
> 30:39

The last is especially intriguing, for it brings together *riba* and *zakat* (alms; also, literally, 'increase') like two sides of a ledger that cancel each other out.

Islamic banking and finance (IBF) refers to a worldwide phenomenon taking place in Malaysia, Indonesia, the United States, the United Kingdom, the Arabian peninsula, the Indian subcontinent and, to a lesser extent, west and east Africa, and not simply the financial systems of those nation-states that have officially at one time or another 'Islamized' their economies, such as the Sudan, Brunei, Iran, and Pakistan. The broadest definition of IBF includes all activities understood to be financial or economic that seek to avoid *riba* – itself a term of considerable definitional anxiety – generally through profit-and-loss sharing, leasing, or other forms of equity- or asset-based financing. Global Islamic banking today owes much to the immigration of Middle Eastern and South Asian students and professionals to the United States and United Kingdom during the 1970s and 1980s, and the consolidation of large US Muslim organizations such as the Islamic Society of North America and the Islamic Circle of North America. The oil boom in the Middle East during the 1970s, which sparked renewed interest in Islamic banking in many Muslim-majority countries,[3] also encouraged the development of a loosely knit interconnected network of Muslim international businessmen, who, working for oil and chemical companies as well as financial firms, gained experience in Western regulatory and business environments. The main nodes of this network were the financial and industrial centers of Europe and the United States, and not the Middle East or South Asia. Thus, although at present Saudi royals and entrepreneurs bankroll many Islamic finance conferences, journals, and academic institutions around the world, the main sites for intellectual production in Islamic economics are places like the Islamic Foundation in Leicester, England, the Institute of Islamic Banking and Insurance in London, and the Harvard Islamic Finance Information Program in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Reputable Islamic finance scholars or professionals in Pakistan and the Middle East owe much of their prominence to their diasporic connections, or the international authority they have acquired through their travels West.[4]

There are two kinds of origin stories about IBF. The first centers on the meaning of Qur'anic verse, and is a scriptural origin story. One variant of this kind of origin story proposes that Muhammad, a merchant by trade, incorporated fair and just economic principles into his teachings and in his daily life. These principles have been passed down through the Hadith to the present day, a font of economic wisdom waiting to be tapped once Muslims worldwide could look beyond the economic precepts of maximizing, calculating *homo economicus* in order to foster a revived *homo islamicus.* Another variant is that the revealed word of God in the Qur'an itself embodies rational economic principles that are quite in line with the modern assumptions of neoclassical economic theory. As a form of universally applicable theory about human beings' economic behavior, economic theory necessarily is in accord with and confirms the source of universal knowledge, the Qur'an: *homo islamicus*

and *homo economicus* are one and the same. These two variants circulate in IBF worlds today. Sometimes they vie with one another; more often, they exist awkwardly side by side. The first takes its cue from interpretations of Islamic law that emphasize social justice and redistribution.[5] Its focus is on understanding the Qur'anic prohibition against *riba* (glossed here as interest, but also as indicating the time value of money) as a means to mitigate inequality between lenders and borrowers. *Riba*, this logic goes, allows the lender to insulate himself from the risks involved in a business venture, while exposing the borrower to the risks of both business failure and default. Eliminating *riba* eliminates the risk-free accumulation of the lender and throws him, with everyone else, into the world of uncertainty into which God has placed human beings.[6] The second variant takes its cue from interpretations of Islamic law that emphasize rationality and formal equality. Its emphasis is on understanding the Qur'anic prohibition against *riba* as a means to ensure that decisions are economically rational by compelling parties to a transaction to mark their activity to market, that is, to ensure the optimality of the market mechanism.[7]

The other kind of origin story is socio-political. It essentially brackets the question of the meaning of the Qur'anic scripture, and seeks instead the beginnings of IBF in twentieth-century Muslim politics in the Middle East and Indian subcontinent. In one variant, classical Islamic contractual forms animated by the Qur'anic injunctions were 'eclipsed' by European colonialism and the rise in the West of the methods and institutions of the modern financial system, which were exported to and instituted in the colonial world.[8] Decolonization and independence movements, coupled with Islamic revivalism, fostered the re-discovery or re-invention of classical contractual forms and doctrines.[9] The oil boom provided the wealth necessary for an alternative system of finance to grow and mature. Another variant of this origin story does not challenge these understandings of the beginnings and causes of Islamic banking and finance, so much as it queries their underlying ideological agenda. In this variant, IBF is less concerned with economic assertion and creating a true alternative to Western institutions than it is to foster a sense of collective identity and, especially, bolster the position of national elites in the face of assertions of resurgent 'Islamic' identities that might supersede them.[10] In both variants, the history proposed for Islamic finance is the same, but one variant views IBF emerging to serve an economic need, while the other views it emerging to serve a political need. The former locates it within a broad tradition of Islamic revivalism, including Islamic socialism and modernism (often at odds); the latter locates it squarely within 'fundamentalism'. Both stress the importance of key texts, written in the first third of the twentieth century, that married Islamic assertion with Keynesian and/or socialist economic theories.[11] Both also credit the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the *Jama'at-i-Islami* in the Indian subcontinent with fomenting reflection on Islamic economic alternatives,[12] and the tension between modernist and neo-revivalist interpretations of scripture.[13] One variant of the

socio-political origin story tends to see IBF as providing potentially viable and practical alternatives to 'conventional' finance; the other tends to see it as impractical, as rarely living up to its promises, and as sidestepping the prohibition of *riba* through simple accounting tricks or linguistic sleights of hand.

It is tempting to attempt to locate the first kind of origin story, the scriptural story, solely within IBF worlds, and the second, the socio-political, wholly outside such worlds looking in. The first kind clearly comes from the position of a believer reading the sacred texts and engaging in the interpretative work, *ijtihad*, that is incumbent on the faithful. The second kind clearly comes from social scientific modes of inquiry into social, historical and political origins, causes and consequences of human activity, whether or not those humans ascribe their actions to divine guidance or divine plan. Yet what is striking is the extent to which these stories and their variants intertwine with one another, sometimes in apparently contradictory ways, sometimes not, and are voiced in all manner of forums and settings, both 'inside' and 'outside' IBF worlds. Indeed, their circulation calls into question the very notion of an inside and an outside to IBF. This observation is the starting point for this chapter.

Formats and distinctions

The distinction between Islamic and conventional finance (which is the term most often used by people involved in IBF for financial activities that involve or touch on *riba*) could be said to hinge on religion or faith. What is surprising, however, is the extent to which questions of faith or belief take a back seat to questions of technique or instrumentality in contemporary IBF forums. In a sense, 'Islamic banking and finance' *is* the debate over its own origins and the debate over *riba*: how it is defined, how it is avoided, and how it has become the absent center of IBF practice today. As an ongoing debate among an enormous number of participants, not a thing or clear-cut set of practices, it cannot be said to have an inside or an outside. As an ongoing debate often grounded in specific techniques or contractual forms, whose formal properties more than their transcendental status ground the debate, IBF also cannot be said to be strictly speaking a 'religious' phenomenon, unless any and all debates over putatively economic activities and practices are simultaneously over putatively religious or transcendent concerns. This is a proposition this chapter will not challenge, and ultimately supports. Indeed, IBF practice holds a mirror to conventional practice and reveals its non-modern character, a character where the work of purification and stabilization of 'religion' and 'economy' is revealed as continuous, not settled in the Renaissance, or with Weber.[14]

Islamic banking and finance provides a perfect example of what economic sociologist Michel Callon describes as the 'performation' of the economy, the processes through which explicitly articulated economic theories serve 'as a frame of reference to institute each element of the market'.[15] Islamic economics configures and formats the new object called 'the Islamic economy' or 'the

Islamic financial system', but where Callon delineates 'the essential contribution of economics in the performing of the economy',[16] I would like to draw attention to the essential contribution of Islamic economics in the performing of the Islamic economy represented by IBF, and 'the economy' itself, Islamic or otherwise. For the mutual intertwining and interconnection of IBF and conventional finance – understood as ongoing debates that call forth, purify, and stabilize the objects they name even as those ongoing debates represent intensively proliferating hybridizations between 'Islamic' and 'conventional' finance – reveals that the performation (Callon's neologism for performative constitution) of the Islamic economy is simultaneously the performation of 'the' economy, particularly its supposedly rational and secular character. The role of Islamic economic theory in performing the Islamic economy is nowhere more evident than in the linguistic slippage in commonly heard (or read) phrases like 'Islamic finance faces many challenges today',[17] where the phrase 'Islamic finance' indexes both a scholarly or disciplinary activity, and an on-the-ground reality. It is this absent distance between the research and the reality it represents that points up the dense network of connections that obviates any neat compartmentalization of Islam, Islamic finance, conventional finance, and the secular.

This is why IBF is frequently, if not almost exclusively, given over to discussions of technique, apparatus, engineering, instrument, and rationality. The instruments of Islamic finance – contractual forms like *murabaha*, *musharaka*, *ijara*, and *mudaraba* (loosely, deferred sale with markup (cost-plus), joint venture, lease-to-purchase, and profit-and-loss sharing, respectively) – occupy center stage in nearly all accounts of IBF. (Even this chapter, an attempt to cut through the debate in a different fashion, must eventually come down to them lest it be read as not sufficiently descriptive or detailed on what Islamic finance 'really is' or how Islamic finance 'really works'.) What is so surprising, as Islamic economist Mahmoud El-Gamal cogently remarks, is 'that Arabic terms … [such as these] are very common in Islamic banking, despite the fact that good translations of those terms are readily available'.[18] 'In contrast', he continues, 'the use of the English terms "interest" or "usury" … has all but replaced the use of the term *riba,* for which no English translation is available.'[19] The notable exception is the occasional use of the expression *lariba* to refer to Islamic banking, as in the name of one of the oldest Islamic finance houses in the United States, the American Finance House – Lariba. Again, the term infrequently appears, and in this case 'Lariba' signifies doubly, as *lariba* and as the acronym for Los Angeles Reliable Investment and Banking Associates.

In claiming that IBF and 'conventional' finance are part of one field, not two, and are densely interconnected, indeed, constituted as separate objects by their very interconnection and their attempt to purify their constant hybridization, I am writing against the discourses of difference and deviance that sometimes characterize discussions of IBF. Charges of difference and deviance go both ways, of course. Regulatory agencies might castigate

Islamic banking as shady or disreputable just as IBF practitioners deride the lack of transparency and 'fictitousness' of debt-based financing, as opposed to the clarity and groundedness in 'reality' of asset-based financing organized through profit-and-loss sharing contracts like *mudaraba* or leasing contracts like *ijara*. Still, the growth of conventional finance cannot be understood separately from the development of Islamic finance, and vice versa. The political economy of decolonization, the oil price rise of 1973, and the creation of new kinds of objects of property like petrodollars, together with their associated forms of knowledge – 'economics' and 'Islamic economics', 'finance' and 'Islamic finance' – signal the mutual frames of reference that performed and formatted each. What is necessary to understand IBF and conventional finance, then, is an 'anthropology of entanglement'.[20] This would obviate such questions as 'what is the place of Islamic banking in the world economy or world politics?', which imagine a place for a specific entity within a larger, more encompassing entity. An anthropology of entanglement simply holds that the logic of encompassment as deployed in such questions misapprehends entanglement as embeddedness, or takes recombinations for relationality. It necessarily queries other modes of analysis, like economics, that unproblematically accept the slippage between finance as an activity in the world and finance as an intellectual project.

Three examples will serve to demonstrate the entanglement of IBF and conventional finance, both as objects and forms of inquiry. First, consider the fortunes of Pakistan's 'economic Islamization' project. In 1999, the Supreme Court of Pakistan ordered the government to 'Islamize' the country's economy. In June 2002, just a few days before the deadline to do so, it suspended that judgment. The earlier decision had sought the elimination of all forms of *riba*, which the court had ruled was forbidden under Islamic law. The Pakistan court decided that no 'Islamic' reform of the country's economy would be possible until after 'thorough and elaborate research and comparative study of the financial systems which are prevalent in the contemporary Muslim countries of the world'.[21] In short, it called for empirically based comparison and synthesis, a conceptual exercise of the social scientific kind. While temporarily reversing its earlier judgment, the court's 2002 decision left open the possibility of economic reforms in the future. It had to, for the apparent impracticality of creating a financial system that does not rely on interest-bearing debt produces a crisis in knowledge: the Qur'an is unequivocal in its outlawing of *riba*. To accept that interest has practical necessity is thus to deny the Qur'an its status as universal knowledge. Hence, more and better data are necessary to determine how best to craft an Islamic economic 'alternative'. The moral form of empirical facts made by techniques like social scientific comparison and Islamic banking (as object and as study) here testifies to the uneasy unity that obviates any clean distinction between fact and value.

Second, consider the discourse on *hawala* (an informal money transfer system) that emerged as a response to 11 September.[22] After 11 September, IBF came under scrutiny from the US Federal Bureau of Investigation,

Department of Treasury and other US government agencies that sought to track and interdict any financial transactions that might be linked to global terrorism. The news media quickly generated reports about Islamic charities potentially posing as front organizations for money laundering or terrorist fundraising, and traditional informal credit associations like *hawala*.[23] Where just months earlier the mainstream media promoted the virtues of IBF in a series of newspaper reports and television spots about new interest-free mortgage alternatives for Muslims,[24] suddenly the reports focused on the shady and illicit. Islamic financial alternatives were reported as having less to do with religious injunctions against interest than with clandestine and possibly criminal financial activities.

Reports of *hawala* as 'a banking system built for terrorism'[25] relied on the neat separation of 'clean' and 'dirty' financial worlds, and of 'Islam' from 'the West', and led to suspicion and investigation of all IBF activities. Yet *hawala* is an informal money transfer system, not a banking or credit system, not part of the history of IBF as outlined above, and not 'Islamic' in any meaningful way. Its origins more properly belong in informal business and trading networks of long standing that in the years since European imperial expansion have taken on new importance for those without access to the banking, credit and money transfer systems established by 'conventional' finance.[26] *Hawala* is also complexly interlinked with – and defined by – those conventional systems of money transfer and finance. It is not a separate 'world' but a recombinant hybrid network dispersed in many of the same nodes (and the same discourses, of trust, reliability, personal fidelity, etc.) as 'conventional' money transfer systems. Ultimately, of course, Al-Qaeda's money trail led to 'mainstream' financial institutions like Crédit Lyonnais in France, Commerzbank in Germany, the Standard Bank of South Africa, the Saudi Holland Bank (minority-owned by ABN Amro of the Netherlands),[27] and Western Union Financial Services.[28]

Third, consider the changing fortunes of IBF in the United States since 11 September. While Pakistan's effort to create an interest-free economy had been put in abeyance, movements to craft Islamic financial alternatives continued apace in the sites of production of hegemonic financial knowledge, the United States and Europe, especially after 11 September. Initiatives from the 1990s to establish international standards for Islamic financial institutions (such as that of the Bahrain-based Accounting and Auditing Organization for Islamic Financial Institutions, or AAOIFI) generated considerable interest in the US after 11 September, and were critical in the US Department of Treasury's decision to host a forum on Islamic finance.[29] After returning from a trip to Bahrain where he met with the head of the AAOIFI, then-Secretary of the Treasury Paul O'Neill directed his undersecretary for international affairs, John B. Taylor, to issue a call to the IBF community to create such a forum. Held on 26 April, 2002, in Washington, DC, 'Islamic Finance 101' was an outreach effort to the American Muslim community and also an educational seminar for those charged with tracking financial crime and money

linked to terrorist activities. It attracted over one hundred participants from various government agencies (the Departments of Treasury and State, congressional offices, and others) who spent the day being taught the fundamentals of Islamic finance by some of the field's leading specialists. The charge of the seminar, as Taylor put it, was to 'demystify Islamic banking for our colleagues in Washington who may not have had exposure to this topic'.[30] In spite of being considered a 'very positive experience' by those who attended, however, others viewed the Treasury's effort as a weak response, at best, to the freezing of assets of charities and a perceived lack of transparency and accountability regarding the US government's own actions in counter-terrorism since 11 September.[31]

Also at the same time, throughout 2002, the US Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation ('Freddie Mac') expanded its underwriting of interest-free mortgage alternatives. Freddie Mac is a government-sponsored enterprise charged with promoting the liquidity, stability, and scalability of the mortgage market. It purchases and underwrites mortgages and bundles them into securities for sale on the secondary market. The American Finance House – Lariba wrote the first 'Islamic mortgage' in 1987 for the purchase of a home in Madison, Wisconsin.[32] The mortgage contract was on a cost-plus model (*murabaha*) according to which the finance house purchased the house and the client paid the cost of the house plus a pre-set and unchanging mark-up over a period of time. It is the pre-set and unchanging amount of the mark-up that distinguishes this contract from a conventional interest-based mortgage, from the point of view of Islamic finance.[33] Later mortgage products developed by the American Finance House – Lariba used lease-to-purchase agreements based on *ijara* or lease contracts. In March 2001, Freddie Mac signaled its support for American Finance House – Lariba's Islamic mortgages by investing $1 million in existing American Finance House – Lariba contracts. It has since invested a total of $45 million. Before 11 September, Freddie Mac had begun to expand its purchase of Islamic mortgage alternatives. In August 2001, it invested $10 million to purchase lease contracts from the Standard Federal Bank and United Mortgage of America in Detroit.[34] It is significant that the only new entrant into the field of IBF in the US since 11 September, 2001, Guidance Financial Group, is a home financing company, which has already entered into an agreement with Freddie Mac for an initial commitment of $200 million.[35]

The entanglements here include the interpretive work necessary to incorporate the provision of Islamic mortgage alternatives as part of a bank's or other institution's mortgaging powers. The regulatory changes at issue are at the level of the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC), which administers national banks. Banks and other lenders can ask for a regulatory ruling (called an 'interpretive letter') on a specific matter of concern. The interpretive letter then becomes the form through which new products are authorized. And, indeed, it is the formal qualities of the interpretive practice that are of

interest here. In its Interpretive Letter #867, the OCC scripts a *murabaha* contract into its existing understanding of the National Bank Act's sections 24 and 29. What is significant is not the incorporation of an 'Islamic' contractual form into 'conventional' regulations, nor the encompassment or containment of the 'Islamic' form by the 'conventional', but rather their entanglements. Each can imagine its autonomy only through these entanglements. From the IBF perspective, the interpretive letter is a manifestation of *ijtihad* and thus divine inspiration working through the minds of human beings seeking routes to the one truth of God. From the regulatory perspective, *murabaha* is just another kind of contract, and can be added to the laundry list of contractual forms and techniques that set in motion the proprietary procedures of a desacralized modernity. Yet neither can proceed without the other: IBF, in a sense, needs the interpretive letter to warrant its own *ijtihad* just as the OCC needs *murabaha* to warrant the universality of bureaucratic practice. Each provides the formatting for the other, without which the other cannot be imagined and cannot function as an apparatus making things happen in the world, or a technique making things in the world visible to analysis. The entanglement is reminiscent of the unthinkable, yet revealed, imbrication of *riba* and *zakat* indexed in Surah 30 of the Qur'an.

Purifications

This chapter has made central the work of entanglement that configures IBF and conventional finance. Latour and Callon write of the work of purification, those processes and practices whereby the necessarily hybrid and entangled world comes to appear as a set of neatly parceled categories and ontologies, even as the hybrids proliferate. Purification is also the term given to a particular technique in IBF that has to do with the application of the concept of *zakat*, with which I will conclude. As numerous financial corporations attempt to capture market share by 'halalising' their products, they have run into the practical contingencies of the entanglements I have outlined in this chapter. Even as IBF (and conventional finance) hinges on the distinction between the sacred and the secular, the religious and the rational, it becomes impossible in practice to delineate the two in any meaningful sense. The problem is particularly acute for those interested in creating Islamically acceptable or 'shari'a compliant' mutual funds.

Many companies have been offering Islamic investment vehicles such as mutual funds since the late 1980s. Because Islam prohibits certain kinds of business activities (those that deal with pork, alcohol, gambling, pornography, and, according to the interpretations of some people who sit on shari'a supervisory boards, arms production and tobacco, among others) an Islamic mutual fund manager seeking to create a portfolio must first screen out companies that engage in religiously forbidden activities. Because Islam prohibits *riba,* financial service companies (which must use interest at some stage in their operations) are also screened out of the investable universe. Modern

multinationals engage in a wide range of activities not linked to their primary business (hotels serve alcohol; General Motors offers credit cards), and they are screened out as well. Due to the prohibition of *riba*, Islamic portfolio managers have also developed screens based on the financial standing and financial activities of companies that offer stock. The first excludes companies whose debt to market capitalization ratio is greater than or equal to 33 percent. The second excludes companies whose accounts receivables to total assets ratio is greater than or equal to 45 percent. The third excludes companies whose interest income is greater than one-third of their market capitalization.[36]

Such screening, however, poses a problem for Islamic investing, a problem that may seem esoteric to the outside observer but becomes crucially important for the maintenance of Islamic funds' 'Islamic-ness'. Since all modern corporations maintain financial accounts and have debts, how should a 'shari'a compliant' fund deal with that proportion of a corporation's stock value or dividends that ultimately derives from the percentage of a corporation's activity that is based on or otherwise 'touches' interest or interest-bearing debt? Financial ratio screens do not eliminate these earnings entirely but keep them within certain limits. To solve this problem, Islamic investing has devised 'purification' techniques that catch the proportion of earnings ultimately derived from interest and debt and that filter them out of the fund's total earnings. Once the amount of 'tainted' revenue is calculated (itself a complicated process), it is deducted from the fund's dividends and given to charity in the form of a gift. That gift has been a point of controversy within IBF. It is *zakat*, or not? At the time of this writing (2003) most would hold that it is not. Three years earlier, however, most held that it was, or could be. Regardless, Islamic investment companies purify their funds by donating 'tainted' revenue primarily to various Islamic charities. After 11 September, this practice came under scrutiny. As one professional put it, after 11 September 'new revelations were coming up every day and I guess for whatever reason these charities make ideal fronts, but, I mean, who'd a thunk it?' 'Guilt by association' also figured in the regulatory and investigative efforts to trace terrorist money after 11 September, and 'a lot of fingers were being pointed'. That which had made Islamic investing unique, and uniquely Islamic, suddenly became suspect.

Yet in a sense it was always suspect, from the moment of the entanglement of *riba* and *zakat* in the Qur'an itself, to the unexpected connections and overflowings that web Islamic and conventional finance, religion and rationality, reality and representation, to one another in an ever-impossible hybrid. Acknowledging that play of recombination and reconfiguration demands that we acknowledge the manner in which the analytical impulse to specify and thereby purify Islamic and conventional finance is itself the work of framing, equipping, and formatting the space of 'Islamic banking and finance in world politics'. Islamic banking's problems are thereby revealed to be homologous to those of the endeavor to create the field, as well as the analytical impulse to study it.

Notes

1 Research has been supported by grants from the National Science Foundation (US) (#9818258) and the Russell Sage Foundation. The opinions expressed here are those of the author and do not represent the National Science Foundation or Russell Sage Foundation. I would like to thank these sources of support, as well as Tom Boellstorff, Susan Coutin, Cecelia Lynch, Hirokazu Miyazaki, Annelise Riles, an audience at Cornell University, and the editors of this volume for comments on earlier drafts of this chapter. All errors are my responsibility alone.

2 All quotations from the Qur'an are taken from the Dawood translation: *The Koran: With Parallel Arabic Text* (2000).

3 See, e.g. Warde (2000), pp. 92–93; Wilson, (1990).

4 E.g., Kurshid Ahmad, M. Netajullah Siddiqi, M.U. Chapra, among others. See Ahmad (1986); Siddiqi (1983).

5 E.g., Chapra (1992).

6 See Vogel and Hayes III (1998); Gambling and Karim, (1991); Mills and Presley, (1999).

7 El-Gamal (1999), pp. 29–40; El-Gamal (2000), pp. 145–150.

8 Vogel and Hayes (1998), p. 4.

9 Saeed (1999).

10 Kuran (1997), pp. 301–337.

11 E.g., Maududi (1975); Qureshi (1946).

12 E.g. Saeed (1999), p. 9.

13 The modernists emphasizing social justice, and the neo-revivalists emphasizing the legal form of the prohibition of *riba*; Saeed, (1999), pp. 41ff.

14 After Latour (1992); Asad (1993).

15 Callon (1998), p. 22; see also Mitchell (2002).

16 Callon (1998), p. 23.

17 Obaidullah (2000), pp. 131–133.

18 El-Gamal (2000), pp. 145–150.

19 Ibid. pp. 146–147.

20 Callon (1998), p. 40.

21 Pakistan Supreme Court, Civil Shariat Review Petition No. 1 of 2001 18.

22 I am indebted to Marieke de Goede, '*Hawala* discourses and the war on terrorist finance' (2003), pp. 513–532.

23 E.g. 'Age-Old Way of Moving Cash Leaves Little Trail', *Los Angeles Times*, 26 September, 2001.

24 E.g. 'Pursuing an American Dream while Following the Koran', *New York Times*, 5 July, 2001.

25 Ganguly (2001).

26 See De Goede (2003).

27 Willman (2001).

28 'Western Union: where the money is – in small bills', *Business Week*, 26 November, 2001, pp. 40–41.

29 On the creation of the AAOIFI, see Lewis (2001), pp. 103–127; Maurer (2002), pp. 645–667; Pomeranz (1997), pp. 123–130.

30 Dept of Treasury, Office of Public Affairs, Introductory remarks by John B. Taylor, Under Secretary for International Affairs, 26 April, 2002, PO-3068. Available at www.treas.gov/press/releases/po3068.htm.

31 Another important event after 11 September, mentioned by almost all those I interviewed in the summer of 2002, was the publication of a lengthy and sympathetic article on Islamic banking in *Fortune* magazine (Useem 2002).

32 See, generally, Abdul-Rahman and Abdelaaty (2000); Abdul-Rahman and Abdullah (1999). Ebrahim and Hasan (1993), pp. 72–87.

33 Two Middle Eastern financial companies attempted to offer Islamic financial services in the US as well, but with limited success, as did a small financial services company based in

Houston, Texas. The Saudi firm Dallah al-Baraka opened a subsidiary in California in 1988, only to move to Chicago shortly thereafter and to shift its emphasis from consumer finance to real estate and industrial investment. The United Bank of Kuwait (UBK) opened a mortgage company, al-Manzil, in 1998, but closed shop in 2000. MSI, an outgrowth of the Islamic Circle of North America, offered various loan products to consumers based on lease-to-purchase and co-ownership models in the Houston area, but never achieved the visibility or scale of the American Finance House. Unlike MSI and the American Finance House, however, UBK and al-Baraka lacked a constituency in the communities in which they attempted to operate, and, as a result, could not mobilize the networks that the other two companies had tapped into through community connections, mosques, and political and social organizations. Significantly, UBK's entry into Islamic home finance in the US did spark an interpretive ruling from the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC) that has had enduring significance for the field. It is discussed further below.

34 Freddie Mac Press Release, 10 August, 2001, 'Freddie Mac, Standard Federal Bank Announce New Islamic Home Financing Initiative for Michigan Families', available at www.freddiemac.com/news/archives2001/sohinitiative0810.htm. See also 'Freddie Mac provides lease-purchase mortgages for Muslims,' *International Real Estate Digest*, 4 September, 2001

35 See 'Islamic home financing starting the nation's capital', *The Minaret*, July/August 2002, pp. 19–20.

36 These are the screens that guide the Dow Jones Islamic Market Indices, and are generally recognized as the industry standard. See Dow Jones (1999).

References

Abdul-Rahman, Y. and Abdelaaty, M.(2000) 'The capitalization of Islamic (lariba) finance institutions in America', paper presented at the Fourth International Harvard Islamic Finance Information Program Conference, 30 September.

—— and Abdullah, T. (1999) 'Towards Lariba (Islamic) mortgage financing in the U.S.: Providing an alternative to traditional mortgages', *International Journal of Islamic Financial Services*, vol. 1, no. 2. Available on-line at http://www.islamic-finance.net/journal (accessed 29 September 2000).

Ahmad, K. (1986) *Studies in Islamic Economics*. Leicester: Islamic Foundation.

Asad, T. (1993) *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Callon, M. (1998) 'Introduction: the embeddedness of economic markets in economics', in *The Laws of the Markets*. Callon, M. (ed.) Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 1–57.

Chapra, M. (1992) *Towards a Just Monetary System.* Leicester: The Islamic Foundation.

De Goede, M. (2003) '*Hawala* discourses and the war on terrorist finance', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, vol. 21, no. 5, pp. 513–532.

Dow Jones (1999) *The Dow Jones Islamic Market Index*. New York: The Dow Jones Company.

Ebrahim, M. and Hasan, Z. (1993) 'Mortgage Financing for Muslim–Americans', *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 72–87.

El-Gamal, M. (2000) 'An introduction to modern Islamic economics and finance', *Proceedings of the Fourth Harvard University Forum on Islamic Finance*, pp. 145–150.

—— (1999) 'An economic explication of the prohibition of *riba* in classical Islamic jurisprudence', *Proceedings of the Third Harvard University Forum on Islamic Finance*, pp. 29–40.

Gambling, T. and Karim, R. (1991) *Business and accounting ethics in Islam*. London: Mansell.

Ganguly, M. (2001) 'A banking system built for terrorism', *Time*, 5 October.

The Koran, with Parallel Arabic Text (2000). Dawood, N. (trans), London: Penguin Books.

Kuran, T. (1997) 'The genesis of Islamic economics: a chapter in the politics of Muslim identity. Social Research', vol. 64, no. 2, pp. 301–337.

Latour, B. (1992) *We Have Never Been Modern.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Lewis, M. (2001) 'Islam and accounting', *Accounting Forum*, vol. 25, no. 2, pp. 103–127.

Maududi, M. (1975) *The Economic Problem of Man and its Islamic Solution*. Lahore: Islamic Publications.

Maurer, B. (2002) 'Anthropological and Accounting Knowledge in Islamic Banking and Finance: Rethinking Critical Accounts', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, n.s. vol. 8, no. 4, pp. 645–667.

Mills, P. and Presley, J. (1999) *Islamic Finance: Theory and Practice*. New York: Palgrave.

Mitchell, T. (2002) *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Obaidullah, M. (2000) 'Introduction to Part III: Islamic Finance', *Proceedings of the Fourth Harvard University Forum on Islamic Finance*, pp. 131–133.

Pomeranz, F. (1997) 'The Accounting and Auditing Organization for Islamic Financial Institutions: An important regulatory debut', *Journal of International Accounting, Auditing and Taxation*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 123–130.

Qureshi, A. (1946) *Islam and the Theory of Interest*. Lahore: Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf.

Saeed, A. (1999) *Islamic Banking and Interest: A Study of the Prohibition of Riba and its Contemporary Interpretation*. Leiden: Brill.

Siddiqi, M.N. (1983) *Banking Without Interest*. Leicester: Islamic Foundation.

Useem, J. (2002) 'Banking on Allah', *Fortune,* 10 June.

Vogel, F. and Hayes III, S. (1998) *Islamic Law and Finance: Religion, Risk, and Return.* The Hague: Kluwer Law International.

Warde, I. (2000) *Islamic Finance in the Global Economy*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Willman, J. (2001) 'Trail of terrorist dollars that spans the world', *Financial Times,* 29 November.

Wilson, R. (ed.) (1990) *Islamic Financial Markets*. London: Routledge.

4   Identity, power, and the Islamist discourse on women

An exploration of Islamism and gender issues in Egypt

Roxanne D. Marcotte

Introduction

In the 1960s, Egyptian women 'were pushed to work', encouraged to become doctors or lawyers and to 'participate in the socialist change' of society. Since then, a 'resurgence' of Islam has occurred. Marxists have become 'Islamic writers' for 'pragmatic political' reasons and many 'progressive writers' are now starting their works with the pious formula '*bismillah*' (In the name of God) and ending them with '*al-hamdulillah ar-rahman ar-rahim*' (Praise be to God, the Compassionate, the Merciful).[1]

Early in the twentieth century, Reformist voices among Muslims were championing the women's cause. Islamists, defined for the purpose of this chapter as those who denied any dichotomy between religious and secular realms and whose ideology is to actively change society and to seek its transformation into an Islamic state, made similar claims. They sought the restoration of the Muslim world's past glories, by returning to Islamic values and ridding the Muslim world of foreign domination of any kind. The goal of al-Banna (d. 1949), the founder of The Muslim Brotherhood (*al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun*) and forefather of today's Islamists, and his Muslim Brotherhood was to bring about the existence of a 'free fatherland, acting according to the precepts of Islam, applying its social regulations … '.[2] Its members were social activists with a political agenda. Religion was to shape all facets of society, including gender roles, gender relations, and women's rights.

In this chapter, it is argued that, contrary to common perceptions, modernity is influencing the Egyptian Islamist camp and its discourse. In doing so, the following pages examine some of the changes that have occurred throughout the twentieth century in the Islamist discourse on gender-related issues, mainly within the Egyptian Islamist camp, starting with the early discourses of Islamist ideologues such as al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb (d. 1966) and then turning to more recent Islamist figures such as al-Qaradawi, Zaynab al-Ghazali, and Heba Raouf Ezzat. It is argued that this Egyptian Islamist discourse – widely diffused today throughout the Near Middle East and the Islamic world more generally – provides the ideological framework that allows Muslims to adapt to change by reverting to traditional religious values that

promise women greater security, rights, and respect in society, while integrating modern values associated with modernity. In addition, the accommodation of traditional cultural and religious values and principles provides women with the means to negotiate greater freedom from the patriarchal order. This strategy has remained a viable Islamist alternative throughout the century, even increasing in popularity in the last two or three decades more widely over the Muslim world. In an attempt to discover why Islamist ideology appeals to a growing number of Muslims, the present chapter begins with a discussion on perceptions of identity, as Islamism embodies as much religious as cultural symbols of Muslim authenticity,[3] followed by a discussion on power. In doing so, it highlights the difficulties that the Islamist discourse encounters in its appeal to two different sets of values and principles.

The challenges of authenticity

The constant and rapid changes of the last century (colonialism, post-colonial regimes, and globalization) that afflict the Muslim world have led to a perceived inferiority to the West and have brought about an existential crisis that has led to a quest for identity. The struggle for the definition of Muslim identity increasingly took the form of a struggle between the proponents of tradition and those of modernity.[4] The success of the Islamist discourse rests, in part, in its claims to authenticity by appealing to religion as the defining criterion. In the process of defining the self, a liberation is sought embodied in a discourse of resistance to foreign influences, but this is often achieved at the expense of a radicalization of Islamist views, as exemplified by the extreme puritanical views of al-Banna and the radical politics of Sayyid Qutb.

The crisis of identity was exacerbated by the emergence of what Foucault labels 'heterotopic' spaces, that is, a world in which different spaces come into contact with other spaces that seem to bear no relation to them.[5] In the Muslim world, modernist forces have opened up new spaces for women in a number of different spheres (social, political, and economic) which were bound to challenge established traditional spaces defined by older patriarchal forces. The lifestyle of the Western-minded Egyptian elite and upper class contrasted sharply with that of the majority of the lower classes. Al-Banna's moralistic outcry and his puritanical interpretation of Islam is both an expression of his Islamic activism to redefine an Islamic identity in the face of colonialism and imperialism and a reaction to the increased encroachments of capitalism he perceived in the excesses of the Egyptian upper class and the reigning 'foreign spirit'.[6] The control of spaces, put forward in his program for social and educational reforms that he set out in his tract *Toward the Light*, was to serve the moral reconstruction of society and its return to its true Islamic identity by eliminating these new foreign spaces.[7] Thus the newly opened spaces to women came to assume a 'Western/foreign' character and, as such, were to be resisted in the same way colonialism was to be fought. Feminism, viewed as partaking of cultural imperialism, bore the brunt of the

Islamists' attack, a resentment that can be analyzed in terms of class strug-gle.[8] Moreover, there appears to be a sublimation of the century-old fight against economic, social, political, and cultural onslaught by means of a sort of fixation upon women's embodiment of these foreign contaminations, as exemplified through the signs of cultural imperialism on their bodies.

The ruling elite of Egypt have prevented the emergence of any political or social force that would challenge their control of space, discourse, and politics for more than 40 years. The present predicament of Muslim countries like Egypt in the face of growing conservative forces is, in part, the making of the state. Upward mobility and hopes of partaking in the functioning of the state never materialized for those who left rural areas, moved to urban centers and have now become the new middle and lower middle classes. The new urban spaces have increased this sense of crisis. At the same time, the ruling elite have dismissed leftist and Marxist oppositions as 'atheists' or 'agents' of a for-eign power. In the process, the state (under Sadat in Egypt, 1970–1981) encouraged Islamist groups, in the hope that they might clash with leftist and secular-minded oppositions.[9] The collusion of modern Muslim states with the traditional religious forces of society is partly responsible for the demise of state feminism in the 1980s and 1990s[10] and the predominance of the Islamist option, which today has no intellectual opposition.

In a state of crisis, traditional social relationships are favored over the impersonal ones that anonymous cities foster. People attempt to recreate lost families or tightly knitted social relations they previously enjoyed in their rural villages, often through their affiliation with Islamist associations. Rapid social transformation increased opportunities for women's education; and, in addition, employment has socially disrupted the more traditional middle and lower middle classes.[11] Moreover, consolation from anxiety is imagined in 'a world where the division and control of space seems natural and proper',[12] and Islamists provide such coping strategies with their own version of the control of social spaces (ethical, social, moral, and legal). They seek to recon-struct the social (and eventually political) fabric of society with their new Islamic 'counter-culture', hoping that it will replace the dominant 'modern and western culture'.[13] The first and foremost victims of such control are women who are the 'symbol' of an Islamic identity that is still deeply rooted in concepts of honor, segregation, and specific gender roles that are central to traditional patriarchal societies. Islamists advocate a new gender-specific divi-sion of spaces that requires 'proper' Islamic female attire. Paradoxically, Islamists must address the issue of greater women's participation in society, brought about by radical social transformations. The same 'proper' Islamic female attire can, therefore, provide women with increased mobility and access to public spaces, traditionally defined as male spaces, a natural conse-quence of the Islamists' support of women's education, a condition for their fulfillment of their roles as mothers and wives. Moreover, women themselves believe in the liberating power of Islam and in the empowerment that proper Islamic dress (*ziyy islamiyy*) offers.[14]

The claim to authenticity is the 'backbone' of Islamism with its return to Islam and its moral rectitude,[15] epitomized by proper Islamic female attire and behaviors. The claim of authenticity, articulated in terms of proper Islamic moral rectitude, the manifestation of the discourse of resistance against the West,[16] necessarily comes at a price. The 'ideological propagation' of Islam by means of the Islamic mission or 'call' (*da'wa*) aims at redefining new processes of 'socialisation', so that society may increasingly conform to the new Islamist discourse on moral rectitude, both individually and collectively.[17] This is what Taraki calls the 'counter-cultural enterprise' that seeks 'to reconstruct an "Islamic" culture' in opposition to Western and traditional Arab cultures.[18]

The Islamist discourse becomes an alternate option that is both social and political, such that individual allegiances are gradually withdrawn from the state, thereby hastening its social and political fragmentation. Taylor has analyzed the forces of fragmentation that arise with increased individualism and that make the nation, as a whole, 'increasingly less capable of forming a common purpose and carrying it out. In the face of the growing forces of fragmentation (ethnic minority, ideology, religion, etc.), the nation's common projects and allegiances become weaker through 'a weakening of the bonds of sympathy' and 'the failure of democratic initiative itself'.[19] These two factors appear to plague a number of Muslim countries. The growing legal battles against the state, led by 'advocacy politics', lead to social and political polarization.[20] Advocacy politics characterizes the Islamists' strategy in Egypt. With their growing popularity, Egyptian Islamists have forced the Egyptian government to recognize the moral and religious grounds they tread.[21]

The 'adversarial' spirit of the Islamists' attempts to bring about the realization of an idealized version of Muslim society is also manifested in the generational struggle for self-affirmation and autonomy[22] in their quest for authenticity, oblivious to the legal, social, and political consequences for the majority of the people.[23] They have their own agenda. Already alienated from the ruling elite and the political system, the majority of Egyptians are finding it increasingly hard to identify with the political community. Hence, greater fragmentation results, whereby the 'lack of identification' leads people to view society 'purely instrumentally'. Conversely, the growing 'absence of effective common action' leads people to fall back on and withdraw into their socio-religious identity. In such circumstances, Taylor talks of the gradual disappearance of 'effective common purpose through democratic action' which, in turn, only increases fragmentation.[24] Unfulfilled aspirations and few economic and political opportunities for the Egyptian middle and lower classes[25] have increased fragmentation and led to their alienation from the political community. These factors may account for the increased appeal of the Islamist discourse that uses the fragmentation of the political community to its own advantage.

The role of the state in defining a common national identity is equally crucial. Most states that define themselves as Muslim countries have provided

ambiguous models, preferring to preserve patriarchal privileges and conceptions that guaranteed the status quo. In addition, modernization brought an increased loss of control of men over women and the emergence of a new gender discourse that fueled and increased the sense of crisis. The enactment of new modern personal status laws in Egypt, at first through the first codification of Islamic family law (Ottoman Law of Family Rights of 1917 that applied to the Arab provinces) and then through the piecemeal reforms introduced in the 1920, 1923, and 1929 reform laws, have enshrined in the texts of the law what had historically been left to the discretionary power of local judges. As a matter of fact, the modern Egyptian state substituted itself for the new patriarchal order responsible for women's condition. A good example is the Egyptian law known as '*bayt al-taʿah*' that governed the forcible return of a *nashiza*, a disobedient or rebellious wife, to the conjugal house and prevented her from obtaining a judicial divorce. The forcible return of the disobedient wife was not eliminated with the number of reforms of Egyptian law at the beginning of the century. The modern state enshrined this concept into its legislation. Classical Islamic law had been quite flexible on the matter. Women who had adamantly refused to return to the conjugal home were often granted a divorce. The modern Egyptian state, in its attempt to codify what had been but casuistic and quite flexible judicial procedures, enacted more patriarchal laws detrimental to women.[26] This was the 'modernizing' state. Although Egyptian feminists were arguing against this law by referring to the Scriptures,[27] the state did not abolish the practice in its 1920, 1923, or 1929 family law. Women had to wait until 1967 for its abolition.[28]

Feminists did try to introduce reforms in the Egyptian Family law. They used arguments put forward by Muslim reformers, such as the rector of al-Azhar University Muhammad ʿAbduh (d. 1905), regarding divorce and polygamy. For instance, the Egyptian Feminist Union of Huda Shaʿrawi tried to improve women's lives through the enactment of more progressive laws. In spite of the emerging reformist discourse of the 1920s, the critique of family law by Egyptian feminists such as Shaarawi 'was moderate, if not conservative'.[29] They did not depart from the idea of 'complementary rights and responsibility', thus endorsing the distinctive gender roles ordained by both religion and society.

The discourse on power

From the end of the nineteenth century and throughout the major part of the twentieth century, a number of modern (secular, socialist, Marxist), traditional, conservative, and even pietistic discourses occupied the realm of the discursive.[30] The general *Weltanschauung* throughout the Muslim world fostered the emergence of a dominant and increasingly more modernist and often secularist discourse, especially among the ruling elite and the upper and upper middle class. Although modernism has remained the dominant discourse for the upper classes in many countries that define themselves as

Muslim countries, the 'resurgence' of Islam has signaled the emergence of a voice that seeks to become the new 'dominant' discourse. This emerging Islamist discourse springs from the masses. It challenges politically and socially the existing dominant modernist/secularist discourse. The 'cultural authenticity' (*asala*) advocated by Islamists has merged Islam and nationalism. It is, therefore, not surprising that it simultaneously incorporates notions of liberation and independence. In so doing, the Islamist discourse has transformed the socio-religious identity into a religious ideology that seeks to venture into the realm of the political by promising a return of the Islamic nation's past glories.[31]

Throughout the twentieth century, segments of Muslim society have resisted the dominant modernist discourse that was always perceived as challenging century-old institutions and traditions. Moreover, the dominant modernist discourse challenged patriarchal paradigms about women's role in society. For instance, when Egyptian feminists petitioned for the raising of the minimum marriage age to 16 for girls and 18 for boys, their efforts brought about the requisite changes in the 1929 law, but had little effect on traditional practices which regarded the attainment of puberty as indicating readiness for marriage. Thus the law was not respected, even after a new 1931 law that stipulated that no claims against a marriage could be entertained unless it had been registered. Symptomatic of the patriarchal nature of Egyptian society, the Chamber of Deputies proposed twice in 1937 to abolish the minimum age law.[32]

Dominant discourses that frame the blueprint of their ideal society bow to historical, cultural, political, and even economic changes. Islamists' own blueprint of what should constitute an ideal Islamic society, its organization, and the new spaces to be occupied by women, their roles and their rights become an 'envisioned' alternative framework, couched in its own discourse. More recently, the strong Egyptian traditional religious forces, led by conservative religious leaders of al-Azhar University, coupled with the patriarchal collusion of the state (in efforts to preserve its political supremacy) managed in 1985 to have the Egyptian Constitutional Court declare unconstitutional the 1979 Presidential Decree (an example of Sadat's increasingly authoritarian methods) known as the 'Jahan laws' (Jahan being the name of President Anwar Sadat's wife) that had introduced reforms affecting women, giving them the automatic right to seek a divorce on the basis of the principle of 'harm' if their husband married a second wife, to gain the custody of the children, and to retain the family residence as long as they retained the custody of the children.[33] Once more, women's interests were being disserved by the increasingly conservative state whose role should be to lead in such matters.

The new emerging and more traditional middle and lower middle classes are now perhaps gradually shaping and defining new boundaries of what may well become the future new dominant discourse. The Islamist discourse certainly presents itself as an alternative, but, on the whole, it imparts greater conservatism to the social and political spheres. Considered radical in the

1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, and attacked by the state (in Egypt, Syria, Turkey, and Tunisia), the same Islamist discourse today has become more prevalent. In Egypt, Islamists have been able to form alliances with the New Wafd party (1984 elections) and the Labor party (1987 elections) and have been the force that has made the legislature very conservative on social issues which has had negative effects on women, for example, the 1985 law that diluted the 1979 Presidential Decree provisions.[34] In fact, the increased presence of the Islamist agenda and rhetoric in the 1980s and the 1990s has brought about perceptible shifts in the definition of the terms of public discourses, from secular-oriented to religiously oriented Islamist discourses, that are transforming public debates over the place of women in society. Social and political spaces, even private and intellectual spaces, are being increasingly occupied by the Islamist discourse. A good example is the work of the feminist Egyptian writer Nawal al-Saadawi. Egyptian television wanted to produce a film based on her 1988 short story, *Eyes,* the story of a woman who develops serious psychological problems on account of her traditional and strict religious upbringing, on the condition that the protagonist was not a veiled woman, as she had been in real life; or again, her Lebanese editor refused to publish one of her earlier works with the title *God Dies by the Nile* (it became *Death of the Only Man on Earth*, 1974). Such examples illustrate the shift in public discourse in Arab society.[35]

Intellectual debates over the place of women in the Muslim world have also plied under the weight of the Islamist discourse. For instance, Mernissi, a Moroccan feminist, started to address the issue of women's plight in her sociological studies on Muslim (Moroccan) gender relations back in the 1970s, from modernist and secularist perspectives.[36] In one of her latest works,[37] she has abandoned this approach and written about women's rights and their role in Muslim society throughout history, arguing from an Islamic perspective, in the boldest manner, that the rulings of the religious tradition are highly misogynic and, at best, androcentric.[38] Mernissi has quite eloquently demonstrated the lack of critical perspective on a number of the sources on which Islamic rulings are derived regarding women, all of which account for the highly misogynic world-view of the Islamic tradition. In her chapter 'A Tradition of Misogyny', Mernissi analyzes two *hadiths* or reports transmitted by companions of the prophet, Abu Bakra (who is reported to have said: 'Those who entrust their affairs to a woman will never know prosperity') and Abu Hurayra (who is reported to have said: 'The Prophet said that the dog, the ass, and woman interrupt prayer if they pass in front of the believer, interposing themselves between him and the kiblah', i.e. the sacred shrine in Mecca), which can only be understood by means of a study of the social and historical contexts of the utterance of these 'misogynistic' reports that have been used throughout Islamic history to prevent women from holding positions of authority.[39]

The belief that the debate over women's place and rights in Islam should be brought onto the battlefield of the religious tradition, in the hope that it

may foster a true intellectual debate with the religious circles and provide legitimacy to the criticism it offers to the religious tradition, is an intellectual gamble and an underestimation of the weight of tradition and its representatives. As expected, Mernissi's work, although considered 'the most sophisticated' of 'secularist writings' dealing with women in the Islamic sources, was attacked by many Islamic scholars because it challenged the established religious 'methodology' used for reading *hadiths* – which constitute the second foundation text of Islam. Islamists such as Ezzat criticize Mernissi's approach in the following manner:

> It challenges the established, widely accepted, methodology … A researcher with a secular paradigm when dealing with the Islamic sources rejects established Islamic sciences' methodology and usually bases his/her analysis on approaches that deal with 'texts' regardless of the origin of these texts – revealed or human. Any contribution will always be classified as a secular critique to the transcendental and will hence be rejected and refuted by the mainstream Islamic schools of thought and jurisprudence – even if insightful and worth discussing.[40]

Mernissi's efforts to engage with the religious tradition on its own terms have not yielded the anticipated results, even if Islamist women like Ezzat allude to some of her well-founded insights. The dominant traditionalist/Islamist discourse legislates on the appropriateness of any exegetical approach by virtue of its claimed monopoly over religious interpretations. Islamists (and traditionalists) disregard Mernissi's use and questioning of traditional exegetical approaches for her inability to follow the traditional 'script' of the exegetical tradition. Mernissi challenges their claimed monopoly over the hermeneutical process, but her non-traditionally generated interpretations are rejected. Traditional exegetical processes appear, in a sense, like closed-circuit hermeneutical circles, although they are not exempt from external influences.

The Islamist discourse, on the other hand, is not merely traditional. It constructs new contemporary ideological (religious and political) discourses, with its own truths about the relationship between tradition and modernity, as it understands them in relation to an ever-increasing complex society. Its ideological discourse structures the way it exercises power, for instance, through its definition of space, gender roles, and women's social, political, and legal rights.

Foucault notes that the 'episteme' of a particular period is organized around specific world-views and discourses. It consists in an 'order of things'.[41] An episteme may be seen as the organizational force of any discursive realm, that is, what *can be said*, and what *cannot be said*, for example, the use of a book title such as *God Dies by the Nile*. The episteme that the Muslim world attempted to master for most part of the century was the 'modern' episteme defined as Western, modernist, and secularist, itself characterized by its

institutions, knowledges, rules, and activities consistent with its world-views.[42] The Islamist discourse opposes this Western, secular, and modernist 'order of things' of the modern episteme and introduces its wedge into the dominant world-view.

Dominant discourses determine the nature of truth and knowledge. Whichever explanation 'wins' becomes knowledge and, therefore, 'truth'. Islamists today are thus 'producing' a new discourse of a reconstructed modern Muslim identity that engages in resistance to the dominant modernist/secularist discourse and world-view. Perhaps the tragedy of many contemporary Muslim states is that the modernist/secularist world-view, prevalent throughout the twentieth century, was not completely coherent, thus allowing the older religious world-view to re-emerge and reassert itself as '*the* authentic' world-view.

Discourses are random and contingent to economic, social, and political developments. In this battle for discursive dominance, many Muslim states have attempted to silence dissenting voices and given legitimacy only to official voices. One example will suffice to illustrate the state's negative effect on grass-root women's movements. By 1953, Egypt had given women the right to vote, access to education and to health care, but the new revolutionary government of Nasser banned all political organizations, and this signaled the death of the first national women's association, the Egyptian Feminist Union (founded by Shaarawi in 1923), as well as the Daughter of the Nile Party and all other feminist organizations.[43] The state did not reform the Family law in any significant manners that would favor women. By the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, a state feminism, whereby women's organizations were now working under the umbrella of the new state, emerged, only to be dismantled by the end of the 1970s and the 1980s.[44]

The increasingly less democratic public sphere set the stage for a resurgence of the moral discourse of Islamic groups, perhaps the only permissible dissenting voice coming from the people. The propagation of the Islamist discourse aims at influencing agendas, policies, and ideas of the state, by claiming to 'stand' for the people. The new traditional Islamist middle and lower middle classes are trying to 'stand' for the people and to 'claim to speak' in their name. The power of their moral discourse, as a political tool, is illustrated by the various concessions that many governments throughout the Muslim world have made to traditional religious forces, in their attempts to buttress their legitimacy. Such collusion has taken a number of forms – or 'orders of discourse' – embodied in institutions that draw their authority from their capacity to speak the truth. The state's own 'discourse' of the status of Muslim women speaks of the struggle between state and Islamists. The state's concessions have, in effect, signaled the state's inability to remain the guardian of the 'truth' – the secularist-oriented ideology of its founding fathers – and its inability to defend these principles. Hence the principle of equality so heartedly defended never translated into similar equal legal reforms.[45]

The power to dictate what stands as appropriate religious interpretations produces new structures of diffuse power (social, economical, political, and governmental). The new structures of diffuse power of the Islamist discourse operate through the 're-definition' or the 're-writing' of the body which needs to conform to its 'order of discourse' that encompasses veiling, segregation, sexuality, and reproduction. Foucault's idea that dominant discourses 'write' the body is useful to understand the extent of the re-veiling phenomenon throughout the Muslim world. Veiling and unveiling both operate at the collective and at the individual level (the ultimate sign of personal piety and religious commitment). The dominant discourse of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s was modernization, socialism, secularization, Westernization and, by extension, unveiling. Muslim women needed to emulate their Western sisters. The veil was and still is associated with oppression suffered at the hand of the religious tradition. The veil, by implication, becomes the symbol of the inherent state of backwardness of Muslim society for both Muslim modernists and non-Muslim outsiders.[46]

The emerging Islamist discourse focuses on cultural authenticity and reduces it to Islamic elements, enabling it to distance itself from anything extrinsic to the Islamic tradition, whether it belongs to the religious realm or to traditional social practices. The return to Islam now constitutes a total rejection of anything foreign and, a fortiori, of any Western values and the West's discourse of un-veiling. More symptomatic is the emergence of a new discourse, both in Islamist circles and in scholarly writings, that defines the veil as a symbol of resistance to Westernization in Muslim countries, for example, in Egypt and in Turkey.[47] Women's bodies now take on the burden of a new type of nationalist marker and symbolize the struggle against the foreign 'other'.

Scripts, or what is 'written' upon women's bodies, change according to various discourses. Scripts shape women's (as well as men's) subjectivity, just as they shape spaces. The idea that the dominant discourse 'writes' the body, as exemplified by the new context of the un-veiling/veiling discourse, has consequences for women's own subjectivity. The manner in which Muslim women today define who they are appears to be shifting away from the subjectivity that was experienced some 30 or 40 years ago. The new script advocates re-veiling of women, introduces a new segregation of bodies in public and private spaces, and prescribes a rigorous, at times puritanical, moral order. The new Islamist script dictates the new material to be 'written' on women's bodies in this quest for identity and affirmation of (cultural, religious, national, etc.) authenticity and this may explain, in part, the increased religiosity-cum-conservatism of women throughout the Muslim world.

Veiling is but one of the external manifestations of the emergence of new contending discourses. Islamists call for the application of Islamic law, in particular the implementation of so-called *hudud* punishments (stoning, amputation, etc.), one of their main objectives for the re-Islamization of Muslim societies. Islamization will inevitably bring changes into women's

lives as was the case in Sudan, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Reforms introduced before the Islamic revolution in Iran were all abolished in 1979. 'Unreformed' Islamic laws were instated and the Islamic discourse of Iran's new Islamic regime reintroduced the marriage of pubescent girls (and boys), temporary marriage (in Shi'ism), unilateral divorce, stoning, etc. It took more than 15 years before reforms were gradually re-introduced, in line with the new gender discourse that has now gained momentum in Iran.[48]

The Islamist discourse on women

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, Muslims have proclaimed that Muslim women enjoy greater rights within the traditional framework of the religious tradition. The mission of the Egyptian Association for the Advancement of Women (*Jam'iyyat Tarqiyat al-Mar'a*), founded in 1908, was to bring women back to Islam by showing them how it provided them with more rights than European women ever enjoyed.[49] Calling upon the religious tradition was not only appealing, but it was also meaningful in a period of rapid social changes when traditional patriarchy was breaking down and disrupting traditional social orders. Some women offered passive resistance to change and exhibited increased conservatism in the face of the breakdown of the old patriarchal order. The 'patriarchal bargain', in which they were engaged to overcome a set of concrete constraints, reflected their 'nostalgia' for security (the 'promise of increased male responsibility') and led to their adoption of 'familism' (characteristic of anti-feminist movements)[50] that has never died out in the more traditional sectors of the population.

It is necessary to go back to the works of al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb, whose books have become the staple of a new generation of Islamist university students, to understand today's Islamist discourse in the Arab world, while bearing in mind that their writings are widely translated into Urdu, Indonesian, and English. With the advent of the Egyptian constitutional monarchy (that lasted till the revolution of 1952) headed by King Fu'ad (who ruled from 1923 to 1936), Egypt obtained its symbolic political independence. During this period, Islamists were opposing their own brand of resistance to what they perceived to be the ongoing colonialist hold on Egyptian politics and society. By 1928, al-Banna had founded the Muslim Brotherhood, an urban movement that strove for the establishment of an Islamic state. Al-Banna dreamed of bringing about the realization of a truly Islamic state through the re-Islamization of Egyptian society, to be achieved via education and the establishment of charitable organizations. In his tract *Our Mission,* al-Banna described his brand of social and political activism as a type of nationalism, that is, Islam must become the driving force behind the nation.[51] In his tract *To What Do We Summon Mankind?*, he wrote that Muslims must strive for the establishment of 'the principles of Islam' as the 'foundations on which the resurgence of the modern East, in every aspect of life, be based'.[52]

In the summer of 1947, al-Banna sent a letter to King Farouq (who ruled from 1936 until the revolution of 1952) titled 'Toward the Light' in which he proposed his own Islamic reform program that covered the political, judicial, administrative, economic, social, and educational realms. The extent of the social and educational reforms (over 30 recommendations) highlights the important moralistic nature of his Islamic call. Public morality would be guaranteed by laws, and the imposition of severe penalties would be imposed for 'moral offenses'. Although al-Banna asserts that the treatment of what he calls the 'problem of women' should be undertaken in a way that 'combines the progressive and the protective, in accordance with Islamic teaching', it is obvious that the rulings of Islamic law are to be applied to all aspects of social (private and public) life. He redefines public and private spaces, such that 'segregation of male and female students; private meetings between men and women, unless within the permitted degrees [of relationship], to be counted as a crime for which both will be censured', hence the necessity to close 'morally undesirable ballrooms and dance-halls, and the prohibition of dancing and other such pastimes'. The new moral order envisioned by al-Banna is reminiscent of Wahhabi Puritanism. Al-Banna's new moral order prescribed more traditional gender roles to be monitored and defined with a 'review of the curricula offered to girls and the necessity of making them distinct from the boys' curricula in many of the stages of education'. The Islamist discourse seeks to redefine, control, and extend its power over social and private spaces. This discourse plans to control the 'thinkable' through censorship of plays, films, books, and songs and its selection of material to become part of its own dominant discourse 'for the education of the nation in a virtuous and moral way […] educating them in a way consonant with their best interests'.[53]

The manner in which such a program might be implemented is not addressed, but al-Banna, in his tract *To What Do We Summon Mankind?*, is categorical: laws must conform to the Qur'an (following Qur 5:44: 'And they who judge not according to what God has sent down, they are unbelievers').[54] In the 1950s, similar traditional views were common among al-Azhar University's conservative religious leaders (*ulamas*) who represent the official and traditional voices of Sunni Islam. In its 1952 document, the Fatwa Council of al-Azhar University determined that women's domestic role, nature, emotional disposition, and physical constitution excluded them from holding public positions of authority and, by the same token, that they were forbidden to vote, a right they were only to obtain in 1957 in Egypt.[55]

Paradoxically, the Islamist discourse of al-Banna did not advocate religious conservatism. On the contrary, al-Banna was against 'blind traditionalism'[56] or the exclusion of women's social participation in the Islamic cause. Islamists encourage Muslim women to struggle side by side with men for the Islamic call, so that their chances of success may increase. The only restriction imposed on the activities of women Islamist activists outside the home is that their social and political activities must not be undertaken at the expense of or lead to the breakdown of the family, the fundamental social unit of society.

In a tract titled *Between Yesterday and Today*, al-Banna upheld traditional moral values, gender-specific roles, and believed that 'destroying the integrity of the family and threatening the happiness of the home' was one of the social causes for the dissolution of any Islamic state.[57]

In the early 1950s, Qutb became the head of the Muslim Brotherhood and popularized al-Banna's views[58] in such works as *Social Justice in Islam* (1948), *Islam's Struggle against Capitalism* (1951), and his more radical and still popular *Signposts* (1964). In his *Social Justice in Islam*, Qutb discussed human equality as one of the foundations of social justice (ch. 3) and appealed to a notion of gender equality, a notion to be increasingly incorporated in the Islamist discourse. Equality is affirmed, not only in 'religious and spiritual matters', following the Scriptures,[59] but also in economic and financial matters.[60] The notion of equality itself is traced back to the Scriptures that affirm that both men and women share a common origin,[61] both being an 'equal half of the one "soul"'.[62] From the principle of a common origin, Qutb could argue that both have the right to receive an education, which Islamists insist is an obligation in Islam.

At the same time, however, Qutb did not discard more traditional conceptions of gender differences. For instance, the different shares inherited by men and women are explained by appealing to their respective and different 'responsibilities', whose origin is found in women's 'natural capacity and skills' for managing the household. This explanation enabled Qutb to appeal to women's 'greater right to care' and for men's corresponding 'right of management' over the household.[63] In this, like most traditionalists, Islamists uphold 'gender distinctiveness' and are, therefore, led to overemphasize women's superiority in her quasi-natural gender role (religiously sanctioned) that confines her primarily to the domestic realm.

Traditional gender roles are obviously not discarded, but they now coexist, alongside more modern elements that belong to the growing discourse of equality of the 1950s. For instance, the unequal weight given to testimony in the Qur'an and Islamic law and its apparent inequality is elucidated by appealing to social conditions, rather than to women's natural deficiencies. According to Qutb, this difference – and not inequality – is due to the respective 'practical circumstance of life, not a question of preferring one sex as such over the other or an absence of equality'.[64] Verses in the Qur'an appearing to deny equality are explained away with a number of considerations that appeal to historical, social, or economical considerations. It is noteworthy that when Qutb wrote his more radical *Milestones* 15 years later, the women issue had completely disappeared from his work and had been eclipsed by the Islamist agenda that now focused on the political means to transform a deviant or 'ignorant' (*jahiliyya*) Egyptian society into a truly Islamic state.

The advent of a contemporary Islamic discourse attempting to define an Islamic notion of gender equality was inevitable. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the number of women who have received education, become literate, and entered the labor market has increased exponentially.

These social changes have gradually, albeit inexorably, transformed attitudes towards Muslim women's role in society. As a result, Islamist women themselves partook in activities that would have been unthinkable in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. From the mid-1930s, Egyptian Islamist women formed associations, started journals, wrote in the nationalist press, and associated themselves to political parties.[65] In fact, at the time, women of all political and ideological persuasions were campaigning for women's causes. One of the most vocal representatives of the Islamist camp, Zaynab al-Ghazali, belongs to that generation of women. Her life provides a good example of the possibilities that this discourse of religious activism and empowerment offers to Islamist women. In 1935, she joined the first Egyptian women's organization, the Egyptian Feminist Union (founded by a daughter of the harems, Huda Shaarawi). She was soon dissatisfied, perhaps for what she later described (in a 1981 interview) as the 'deviant innovation' of women's liberation movement.[66] Zaynab al-Ghazali believed that the cause of much of Muslim women's plight is their departure from the true teachings of Islam, so she founded her own Young Muslim Women's association to fight for women and national liberation, but on Islamic grounds. The association was active for 13 years before she joined the Muslim Brotherhood (in 1949) as an active member, an association with the then banned (in 1954, under Nasser) organization that led to her 1965 arrest and subsequent torture.

Zaynab al-Ghazali's vision of women's role in Muslim society, for whom Islam has provided all their rights, is both traditional and modern. On the one hand, she puts forward traditional values associated with the family, married life, and childbearing, while on the other hand, she proposes a modern interpretation of women's social and political roles. According to her, women constitute a 'fundamental part of the Islamic call', since they can be more active than men, especially in view of the fact that Islamists hold that men are the providers of the household and that women need not work. The modern appeal to social and political activism rests on traditional gender roles and conceptions of domesticity, as women 'build the kind of men that we need to fill the ranks of the Islamic call'. Women are the foundations on which rests any virtuous Islamic society. She writes:

> Islam does not forbid women to actively participate in public life. It does not prevent her from working, entering into politics, and expressing her opinion, or from being anything, as long as that does not interfere with her first duty as a mother, the one who first trains her children in the Islamic call. So her first, holy, and most important mission is to be a mother and wife. She cannot ignore this priority. If she then finds she has free time, she may participate in public activities. Islam does not forbid her.[67]

The Islamist discourse integrates traditional and modern values, such that traditional family values and gender roles coexist alongside the possibility of

a new social and political activism for women. There is no better example than her own life story. She included in her first marriage contract a stipulation allowing her to obtain a divorce if her husband did not agree or interfered with her Islamic work. She availed herself of this prerogative and divorced him. Her second husband gave her a written agreement that he would help her in the Islamic call. He did not disappoint her. After the death of her second husband, Zaynab al-Ghazali argued that she had fulfilled her Islamic duty in marriage, refused to remarry and dedicated the rest of her life to the Islamic cause.[68] Stipulations in Islamic marriage contracts are not novel, but Zaynab al-Ghazali's stipulation regarding her work for the Islamic cause is almost unheard of. She used the resources of Islamic legal provisions to her own advantage, thus opening new, but nevertheless Islamically defined, opportunities for Islamist women to venture into traditionally inaccessible male spaces.

The emphasis on women's education constitutes another novel contemporary phenomenon central to both Zaynab al-Ghazali's and Qutb's visions of social activism. Zaynab al-Ghazali went so far as to send a memorandum to the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia to have girls educated.[69] Many Islamists have thus internalized the modern value of education, one of the central pillars of modernization of Muslim states. The new added symbolic value to modern education was, however, often instrumentalist in nature. Qasim Amin, the foremost (secular and modernist) Egyptian feminist writer of the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, called for the education of girls – mainly primary education – in order to bring about a renewed domesticity: girls were to become better wives, companions, and mothers.[70] Education becomes central to the political agenda of the Islamists as a means of re-Islamizing Muslim society: Zaynab al-Ghazali set up reading groups of the Qur'an to educate Muslims in the foundations of their faith. In 1989, Zaynab al-Ghazali wrote in the Egyptian Islamist monthly *The Banner of Islam* (*Liwa' al-Islam*) about women's higher education:

> An illiterate wife would be better at keeping her husband happy, preparing his food, putting on the clothes he likes, cleaning his house, and taking care of his children, than such a university graduate [who neglects her household duties]. What kind of university did she go to? We can only be sorry for our men and women who are the victims of such educational systems. A wife should be an elegant flower. [...] Only fools will equate the education of women with the education of men. [...] We need special programs that will prepare women for their tasks ... to create a loving motherhood ... and build happy families.[71]

Zaynab al-Ghazali's statement echoes al-Banna's 1947 educational program. Her views on women's education eloquently illustrate the fact that, although Islamist discourse on gender equality is part of a significant, albeit subtle, departure from traditional positions, nonetheless, its discourse on gender

exhibits internal tension between two sets of principles where the traditional roles often prevail.

The new discourse on gender equality proposed by Islamists found its way into the works of traditional religious leaders. In the 1960s and 1970s, two rectors of al-Azhar Univeristy, Mahmud Shaltut (1958–1963) and 'Abd al-Halim Mahmud (1973–1978), upheld the 'more egalitarian gender paradigm' that illustrated a shift in attitudes.[72] Similarly, al-Turabi, the ideologue of the Islamic regime in Khartoum (Sudan), proposed similar views on gender equality in his 1973 *Women in Islam and Muslim Society*. Others, such as Muhammad al-Ghazali, a much read Islamist author throughout the last quarter of the twentieth century, and Yusuf al-Qaradawi, both al-Azhar University graduates, propose similar ideas on gender equality[73] that have become part of the new 'thinkable' discourse of Islamist circles.

Two contemporary Islamists, Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Heba Raouf Ezzat, write about gender equality. They co-founded IslamOnline.net, a Qatar-based website that provides online legal advices (*fatwas*), news, and articles. Al-Qaradawi, who noted the influence that the works of al-Banna had on him and his philosophy of social activism, is the Arab world's foremost media religious scholar (*'alim*) with a popular weekly TV program on Islam that reaches over 20 million Arabs. Al-Qaradawi's interpretation of Islam is often quite traditional in his views and arguments, but his status as a cleric and the legitimacy that his al-Azhar University training gives him allows him to present, at times, non-traditional elements to his receptive audience. Although his arguments remain within the bounds of tradition, some of his recent positions on women's political and social roles resemble the views of earlier Islamists and signal a shift away from purely traditional positions.

The fact that a religious scholar of Islamist allegiance appears to be promoting greater gender equality suggests an increasing social consensus among Muslims in these matters. For instance, al-Qaradawi deplores the rise of more traditional views, such as the exclusion of women in Islamist gatherings, and the prevalence of traditional views that advocate greater control and restriction on women's participation in public spheres. Such behaviors are nothing more than renewed efforts to seclude women in the wake of their greater access to public spaces. Al-Qaradawi rejects these excessive views with an exegesis that contextualizes a number of Qur'anic passages (such as the verses addressing specifically the wives of the prophet where seclusion is discussed),[74] he presents historical counter-examples to seclusion in the early Islamic community and early interpretations that contradict later misogynic interpretations, he notes that from an Islamic legal point of view (*shari'a*) confinement is not the normal state of affair, but that it only constitutes a Qur'anic legal punishment for adultery,[75] and he introduces the concept of modesty to replace seclusion.[76]

In line with Islamist ideology, al-Qaradawi aims to empower women within the Muslim community, especially in the public sphere, whence they have traditionally been excluded. For instance, he uses the notion of equality

to refute the claim that a woman's voice was not to be heard by any males outside a specified category of relationships because it is part of her *awrat*, a claim that is used to silence women in public. He criticizes what he calls the 'misogyny [that] abounds in the pronouncements of many Islamic "scholars" and "imams"', a misogyny that is responsible for the mistreatment of Muslim women, contrary to the spirit of Islam which 'has honoured and empowered the women in all spheres of life'. Al-Qaradawi identifies this equality in the legal sphere, where 'the woman in Islamic law is equal to her male counterpart', whereby she is liable for her actions and her 'testimony is demanded and valid in court'.[77] It is not surprising that part of al-Qaradawi's discourse on gender echoes the voices of a growing number of Muslim women who criticize misogynic religious interpretations.

Any return to the foundation texts is, however, confronted with the literal gender inequalities of a number of Qur'anic passages. The interpretative strategies of the Islamists to try to make sense of scriptural discrepancies that undermine their claims to gender equality reflect the extent of their willingness to engage with modernity. Al-Qaradawi does not reject the Qur'anic inequality of women's testimony. His exegesis, therefore, brings to the fore an inescapable tension, even contradiction. For instance, he introduces arguments that had been proposed by Mahmud Shaltut (1893–1963), rector of Al-Azhar University, to argue for equality, even in matters of testimony. Al-Qaradawi does not, however, use Shaltut's refutation of the argument that women's testimony without a man's testimony is inadmissible to draw the warranted conclusion that women and men are equal. A prudent traditionalist reflex in view of his audience may, in fact, be more symptomatic of the irreconcilability of incompatible principles. Although he alludes to the possibility of thinking outside the boundaries of tradition, he is, nonetheless, bound by the script of the tradition and refuses to adopt a position that could go against the literal meaning of the Scriptures. The predicament appears insurmountable. Al-Qaradawi does not dismiss the Qur'anic literal unequal injunctions that specify that women's testimony is to be discarded 'altogether' for major crimes and those requiring 'retaliation', that is, the blood money to pay to the family of the victim. In so doing, he justifies and, therefore, legitimizes these injunctions. He explains these injunctions by appealing to women's intrinsic nature which, he tries to insist, does not take anything away from their 'humanity and integrity', apparently adopting Shaltut's position. Al-Qaradawi attempts to save the tradition, but can only reassert the inequality found in the Scriptures that structures the new Islamist discourse on gender equality.

The Islamist discourse on authority also displays signs of change. Al-Qaradawi's collection of legal advices (*fatwas*) contains a legal advice allowing for women's candidacy for parliamentary elections. The second legal advice revisits this particular issue, in the form of a veiled criticism of an earlier legal advice provided by some *ulamas* of Al-Azhar University (1952) who had

rejected women's suffrage because it would necessarily lead to women presenting themselves in positions of power which, in turn, would lead to their potential victory in elections. In his legal advices, al-Qaradawi emphasizes the historical context, rather than the normative value ascribed to *hadith* reports and the Qur'anic rulings on which traditional interpretations rest. He appears to depart from a literalist perspective to pursue the 'spirit' of the rulings. In any case, his exegetical approach allows him to adopt more pragmatic views on women's role in contemporary society.[78]

Al-Qaradawi's position on authority and political participation of women is, however, torn between two paradigms: the modern and the traditional. He believes that woman can hold any position of authority, except that of head of state because they first need to be able to fulfill the duties associated with their gender. In fact, al-Qaradawi's main concern is to ensure that women are provided with the social and political rights that will enable them to become productive contributors of society, but first and foremost, as mothers and wives of steadfast Muslims, and then as active members of Muslim associations, working for the Islamic call. This is best illustrated with one of al-Qaradawi's legal advices on marriage (20 November 2000), where he writes:

> Marriage matures a man's character through the responsibilities he has to shoulder, as a husband and a father, and similarly matures a woman's character through the responsibilities she has to shoulder, as a wife and a mother. … Having got married, a man can focus on perfecting his work, reassured that there is someone back home who disposes of his affairs, preserves his money and takes care of his children.[79]

Traditional religious figures such as al-Qaradawi do inspire a number of young Muslim women. Heba Raouf Ezzat, a lecturer in political science at Cairo University who writes on women's rights, belongs to the new generation of university-educated Muslim women who make the Islamist discourse their own. Ezzat frames her discourse on women's rights within the confines of the Islamic tradition and opposes her approach to the secularist discourse,[80] writing 'I don't search [for ideas] outside Islam, and there's no such thing as Islamic feminism',[81] where the concept of feminism is understood as a non-indigenous import. The Islamic notion of 'gender complementarity', therefore, becomes central to her arguments, as it pays full respect to 'housewifery', motherhood, and gender distinctiveness found in the Qur'an, *hadith* reports and traditional medieval interpretations, while alluding to greater gender equality. It is not surprising that Ezzat calls for unlimited access to both education and employment. In a fashion similar to al-Qaradawi, Ezzat integrates two sets of values. Her Islamist discourse focuses on the values associated with domesticity, that is, women's roles as wives and mothers, while the values of modernity emerge with her appeal for Muslim women's new social, economical and political roles, the latter subsumed under the former.

Ezzat proposes a hierarchical understanding of women's roles. Priority goes to women's 'specific' roles as mothers and wives over the more 'general' roles they may have in society.[82] Typical of the Islamist discourse, Ezzat seeks to 'liberate women, and still keep the family'. Ezzat's evaluation of the progress of feminist struggle is measured by its ability to preserve this fundamental social structure of society.[83] She also attacks the notion of feminism, a non-Islamic concept, for being the product of the secularization of Western society, thus, rendering the concept itself incompatible with Islam. She criticizes the feminist legalistic approach that has been privileged in the Arab and Muslim world to introduce changes to personal family laws in the realms of marriage, divorce, or polygamy in order to bring about more 'equality' for not having addressed the real economical, political, and social causes of inequality for which present political systems are responsible. Feminists, she argues, 'abuse' the law and, thus, have become one of the 'allies' of the state against what they deem to be the 'fundamentalist' threat.[84] Implicit in this line of argument is that legal changes to the personal family law would be unnecessary if Muslim states did provide justice and equality. In turn, the Islamist goal that purports to bring about the realization of an Islamic state that will be the guardian of justice and equality greatly increases the legitimacy of its discourse. More fundamentally the legal approach privileged by some feminists constitutes a threat to the Islamist aim of re-Islamizing society. Nowhere does Ezzat spell out the actual rights women would enjoy in a truly Islamic society for which Islamists are fighting, except those prescribed by Islamic law (*shari'a*).

In a familiar fashion, Ezzat believes that, in Islam, women can hold positions of authority, even in the political realm: 'some women are definitely eligible' to hold political offices. More generally, however, the holding of political offices does not constitute the norm, but it is rather the exception or the 'occupation of a minority of people' that possess 'special competence'. The nature of women's primary role – mother and wife – makes it very difficult for them to be simultaneously competent in their specific traditional roles and in the general responsibilities that their political office would require. Ezzat can, therefore, conclude that 'only few women can practically manage both the responsibilities of family and jurisdiction' at the same time. Women should be able to choose if they are capable,[85] but, again, only once they have fulfilled their more 'specific' roles that have priority over their 'general' social or political roles.

Ezzat's attempts to save tradition face the same predicaments encountered by al-Qaradawi in his own attempts to save tradition. For instance, Ezzat fails to address Mernissi's criticism of the use of misogynic *hadiths* in religious interpretations.[86] In her attempts to re-interpret the Islamic tradition, Ezzat neglects to mention the misogynic character of a great number of these reports. She prefers to identify reports that can serve as counter-examples to Mernissi's criticism, appealing to what she calls a 'reformed (*tajdid*) method' of interpretation to replace Mernissi's 'selective anti-Sunnah' method, that is,

her criticism of *hadiths.* Ezzat nowhere identifies the specific characteristics of such a 'reformed' method which would ultimately need to remain within the confines of traditional exegetical approaches. Ezzat's appeal to 're-read' the tradition, perhaps in light of the relative fluidity of the authority of *hadiths*, is important, but Islamists are ultimately bound by their adherence to their understanding of the tradition and confined to its own traditional method-ological approach to interpretation in any 're-reading' that might be envisioned.

A critique of the Islamist discourse

The Islamist discourse and *Weltanschauung* are modern constructs that are constantly being redefined. These new constructs are the result of an ongoing and dynamic process to bridge the gap between tradition and modernity. On the one hand, traditional conceptions of gender equality, inherited from the Scriptures and their theological, social, and legal interpretations, are reiter-ated. On the other hand, new social and political realities inevitably influence the process of interpretation. People like al-Qaradawi (and Muhammad al-Ghazali) use their 'scripturalist and legal expertise' to engage in 'the modern struggle for gender equality'.[87] In fact, the Islamist discourse's appeal may lie in the apparent orthodoxy of its discourse and the modern stands it seeks to incorporate.[88] This particular blend of traditionalism and modern pragma-tism has enabled it to develop a number of contemporary religio-political ideologies (some quite radical and, at times, even violent).

The emergence of an Islamist ideology is symptomatic of the identity cri-sis the Muslim world has been experiencing. Al-Banna's mission to establish a puritanical Islamic society and Qutb's re-conquering of society through rad-ical politics exemplifies this need to reassert Muslim identity. Traditionalism, associated with its claims to authenticity, flourishes, while new and modern approaches are simultaneously proposed for the re-interpretation of the tradi-tion. Although the new scripturalist approach of many Islamists advocates for a return to the Scriptures, it simultaneously disregards centuries-old interpre-tations, with suggestions that Islamic jurisprudence, '*fiqh* must constantly adapt to fresh circumstances'.[89] This new social and political activism can equally be read into the Scriptures, in spite of the fact that some of its inter-pretations reinforce traditional views on women[90] that are taken to be 'signs' of a renewed Muslim identity and its higher moral value in the present-day context.

The quest for authenticity leads Islamists to argue for the implementation of Islamic law which they too often wrongly believe to be an unchanging body of laws. The 'utopian' appeal to Islamic law as the foundation of an Islamic state, transformed into a 'political slogan', and its legislative role over all of society ignores both the historical and dynamic nature of Islamic law.[91] For al-Azmeh, the utopian world-view of the Islamist 'programme is made not of policies but of tokenist precepts' and of a number of romantic ideas

regarding Islamic political rule, in terms of Caliphate, of consultative assembly (*shura*) or of a puritanical Islamic ethical and moral order.[92] The use of utopian 'tokenist' precepts governs the Islamist discourse on women's role and rights that rests on appeals for the application of Islamic law, social norms, and gender roles. No consistent draft of an Islamic constitution or of codified *shari'a* laws is ever proposed. The fact that the 'topos' for the realization of this true Islamic society, based on Islamic Law, corresponds to an a-temporal, universal-like, and a-historical utopia is significant. Al-Azmeh notes that Islamic law, or for that matter Islam itself, is a heterogeneous body of laws or rulings[93] developed for particular historical contexts, whereas most Islamists take the casuistry of Islamic rulings as normative and a-historically defined. Islamists offer divergent voices on the issue of gender, but there is plenty of evidence to suggest that the utopian vision of any such state will fall prey to political and pragmatic considerations, as was the case for the diverse so-called Islamic regimes of Kabul, Khartoum, Tehran, Riyad, or Islamabad. Diversity and heterogeneity of interpretations have always been the historical state of affairs.

The increased presence of the Islamist discourse results in the increased manifestation of its own moral and ethical order into the public spaces. This 'superior' moral and ethical order produces its own brand of 'quiet coercions'. The idea of the 'monitoring gaze' as an instrument of social coercion, that is, an instrument of diffuse power, is useful to describe the social and psychological pressures many Muslim women experience as a result of the increased manifestation of an ever-more present Islamist discourse, observable throughout a number of Muslim countries.[94] After a spate of attacks against and rapes of Egyptian women, Islamists were quick to highlight that improper Islamic dress and behavior were the cause of these incidents, implying that proper moral standards had not been respected, thus rendering the victims (often unveiled women) morally responsible.[95] The manners in which bodies behave, dress, talk, and walk are placed under the diffuse 'monitoring gaze' of increasingly numerous traditional forces of Muslim societies. The new normative dominant discourse becomes the regulatory body of a new subtle and diffuse coercion throughout society, whereby people monitor themselves and others for what constitutes new appropriate, that is, Islamic, behaviors and appearances.[96]

The political claims of the Islamist discourse seek to substitute themselves to the civil society. Al-Azmeh notes that fundamentalism and the 'primitivism' of the Islamist discourse attempt to present themselves as 'a subaltern nationalism seeking a prenationalist paradise' that shapes what he calls the 'para-nationalist Islamism of the Arab world today', with its backward or 'involution' outlook.[97] The 'legalist utopia' of Islamist politics produces its own ideal political order, where a relatively few 'tokens of Islamicity', such as the veil, dietary taboos, inheritance, etc., as 'metonym for Islam' expressed in medieval handbooks of Islamic law, would render any state Islamic.[98] These are the stakes of the 'monitoring gaze' of women's bodies.

Common interpretations of the 'resurgence' of Islam oppose secularist or modernist forces to Islamist forces. This interpretation is akin to Huntington's theory of history whose outcome must necessarily be the elimination of the 'retrograde', that is, Islamic forces and their replacement with the 'progressive' modern/secular forces. This rather Hegelian interpretation is Manichean in nature. In reality, historical changes exhibit greater plurality, discontinuity, and disjuncture. The historical period in which the 'resurgence' of Islam now occurs reveals the struggle between different forces, at different levels, and possessing different patterns. The question, however, is the following: Why has the Islamist discourse become more appealing as a significant historical force? The answer may lie in the complexity of the parameters that need to be taken into account: ethnicity, national identity, religious affiliation, militarism, personal religiosity, etc. that are used by 'people' in the discourses that position them vis-à-vis others. The answer may also lie in the process of breakdown of the dominant discourse that gradually gives way to the reconstruction of new national and Islamic identities that are believed to be able to solve the present identity crisis of the different regions of the Muslim world. It is therefore important to pay more attention to the context of the emergence of each of these discourses and their historical developments, since these are shaped by the colonial experience out of which they emerged.[99] It is equally crucial to analyze Islamist discourses to uncover the implications that their views will have on women's future lives and rights.

Conclusion

Islamism can only be understood once its two main components – the political and the religious – are taken into account,[100] since Islamist ideology 'revolves around the advocacy of a political order which makes possible what is known as "the application of the *sharī'a*," or Islamic law'.[101] Its project is the re-affirmation of Muslim identity and values through the construction of what al-Azmeh calls a 'legalistic utopia', quite distinct from the true 'polyphonic' experience of the historical Muslim community.[102] The call for the re-instauration of Islamic law becomes a 'transformative' project that seeks to transform the whole society and, by extension, women's lives in order to have them conform to the Islamist 'utopia'.

Paradoxically, Islamism's dual nature may account for its present appeal for a number of young Muslim women as it incorporates both modern elements that provide it with its social and political activism and traditional elements that provide it with its deep moral, at times puritanical, and religious underpinning. The Islamic reference, even in its 'tokenist' forms,[103] proves to be the Islamist discourse's most appealing and potent element.

Notes

1 Mentioned by al-Saadawi in an interview included in Badran and Cooke (1990), p. 404.
2 Al-Banna (1978), p. 31.
3 Tibi (2001).
4 Lee (1997).
5 Foucault (1993), pp. 420–6.
6 Al-Banna (1978), p. 129.
7 Ibid. pp. 127–9.
8 Taraki (1995), p. 649.
9 Ibrahim (1980), p. 447.
10 Hatem (1992), pp. 231–51.
11 Taraki (1995), p. 658.
12 Danaher, Schirato and Webb (2000), pp. 113–14.
13 Taraki (1995) p. 658.
14 Ahmed (1992), pp. 220–5.
15 Ezzat (1999), p. 96.
16 Ahmed (1992), pp. 236–7.
17 Al-Azmeh (1993), p. 71.
18 Taraki (1995), p. 658.
19 Taylor (1999), pp. 112–13.
20 Ibid. p. 115.
21 Jansen (1997), pp. 95–116.
22 Hatem (1992) pp. 235–6.
23 Taylor (1999), p. 117.
24 Ibid. pp. 117–18.
25 Ibrahim (1980), pp. 446–7.
26 Sonbol (1996), pp. 277–89.
27 Qur 2:231, 'Do not keep them by force for vengeance. Retain them with kindness or leave them with respect'.
28 Badran (1995), pp. 131–2.
29 Ibid. pp. 125–7.
30 Voll (1994), pp. 21–3.
31 Al-Azmeh (1993), p. 71.
32 Badran (1995), pp. 127–8.
33 Hatem (1992), pp. 240–4.
34 Ibid. pp. 244–5.
35 Related by Saadawi in an interview included in Badran and Cooke (1990), pp. 204–12, 403.
36 Mernissi (1987).
37 Mernissi (1991).
38 Mernissi (1993).
39 Mernissi (1991), pp. 49–81.
40 Ezzat (2003).
41 Foucault (1994).
42 Foucault (1995).
43 Tucker (1998), p. 119.
44 Hatem (1992), pp. 231–3.
45 Stowasser (2001), pp. 114–16.
46 Hoffman (1987), pp. 23–50; Amin (2000); Darabi and Thomson (1999).
47 El Guindi (1999); Ask and Tjomsland (1998), pp. 1–16.
48 Mir-Hosseini (1993); (2000); Marcotte (2003), pp. 153–66.
49 Baron (1994), pp. 176–8.
50 Kandiyoti (1988), pp. 282–5.

51 Al-Banna (1978)*,* p. 54.
52 Ibid. p. 88.
53 Ibid. pp. 127–8.
54 Ibid. pp. 88–9.
55 Stowasser (2001), pp. 104–7.
56 Al-Banna (1978), p. 88.
57 Ibid. pp. 26–7.
58 Qutb (1996), pp. ix–x.
59 Qur 4:124; Qur 16:97; Qur 3:195.
60 Qutb (1996), pp. 61–2.
61 Qur 7:189, 'from a single soul'; see Qur 4:1.
62 Qutb (1996), pp. 59, 64.
63 Ibid. p. 62.
64 Ibid. p. 63.
65 Baron (1994), p. 115.
66 Hoffman (1985), p. 235.
67 Ibid. pp. 236–7.
68 Ibid. p. 237.
69 Ibid. p. 244.
70 Amin (2000), p.72; Ahmed (1992), pp. 155–64.
71 Quoted in Jansen (1997), p. 156.
72 Stowasser (2001), p. 101.
73 Ibid. pp. 101–2.
74 Qur 33:32–3.
75 Qur 4:15.
76 Qur 33:33; al-Qaradawi (2003a).
77 Al-Qaradawi (2003b).
78 Stowasser (2001), pp. 111–14.
79 Al-Qaradawi (2000).
80 Ezzat (1999); (2002)
81 Negus (2000).
82 Ezzat (1999), p. 113.
83 Ezzat (2003).
84 Ezzat (2003).
85 Ezzat (2003).
86 Mernissi (1991).
87 Stowasser (2001), p. 117.
88 Lee (1997), p. 112.
89 Ibid. p. 111.
90 Ibid. p. 103.
91 Al-Azmeh (1993), pp. 14, 94.
92 Ibid. p. 71.
93 Ibid. p. 24.
94 For Egypt, see Geadah (1996).
95 Guenena and Wassef (1999), p. 47.
96 Foucault (1980), pp. 155–6; see also, with his concept of 'panopticonism', Foucault (1995), pp. 195–230.
97 Al-Azmeh (1993), pp. 73, 95–6.
98 Ibid. pp. 25–6.
99 Ahmed (1992)*.*
100 Jansen (1997), pp. 1–25; Sayyid (1997).
101 Al-Azmeh (1993), p. 24.
102 Ibid. pp. 18–38.
103 Ibid. p. 71.

References

Ahmed, L. (1992) *Women and Gender in Islam.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Amin, Q. (2000) *The Liberation of Women and the New Woman; Two Documents in the History of Egyptian Feminism*, Sidhom Peterson, S. (trans). Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press (reprint of 1992).

Ask, K. and Tjomsland, M. (1998) 'Introduction', in Ask, K. and Tjomsland, M. (eds), *Women and Islamization; Contemporary Dimensions of Discourse on Gender Relations*. Oxford: Berg, pp. 1–16.

Al-Azmeh, A. (1993) *Islams and Modernities.* London: Verso.

Al-Banna, H. (1978) *Five Tracts of Hasan Al-Banna' (1906–1949): A Selection from the Majmu'at Rasa'il al-Imam al-Shahid Hasan al-Banna'*, Wendell, C. (trans). Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Badran, M. (1995) *Feminists, Islam, and Nation; Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

—— and Cooke, M. (eds) (1990) *Opening the Gate: A Century of Arab Feminist Writing.* Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Baron, B. (1994) *The Women's Awakening in Egypt: Culture, Society, and the Press.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Danaher, G., Schirato, T. and Webb, J. (eds) (2000) *Understanding Foucault*. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin.

Darabi, P. and Thomson, R. (1999) *Rage against the Veil: The Courageous Life and Death of an Islamic Dissident* (translated from the German). Amherst: Prometheus Books.

Ezzat, H. (2003) 'Women & The Interpretation of Islamic Sources', www.islam21.net/pages/keyissues/key2-6.htm (accessed 13 August 2003).

—— (2002) 'Rethinking Secularism … Rethinking Feminism', www.islamonline.net?English/contemporary/2002/07/Article01.shtml (accessed 18 June 2003).

—— (1999) 'al-Mar'ah wa al-Ijtihad: Nahw Khitab Islami Jadid', *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, vol. 19, pp. 96–120.

El Guindi, F. (1999) *Veil: Modesty, Privacy and Resistance.* Oxford: Berg.

Foucault, M. (1995) *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, Sheridan, A. (trans). New York: Vintage.

—— (1994) *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. New York: Vintage Books (reprint of 1970).

—— (1993) 'Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias', in *Architecture Culture 1943–1968: A Documentary Anthology*, Ockman, J. and Eigen, E. (eds). New York: Rizzoli, pp. 420–6.

—— (1980) 'The Eye of Power', in *Power/Knowledge; Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, Gordon, C. (ed.), Gordan, C. *et al*. (trans). New York: Pantheon Books, pp. 146–65.

Geadah, Y. (1996) *Femmes voilées, intégrismes démasqués*. Montréal: VLB Éditeurs.

Guenena, N. and Wassef, N. (1999) *Unfulfilled Promises; Women's Rights in Egypt*. Cairo: Population Council, West Asia and North Africa Regional Office.

Hatem, M. (1992) 'Economical and Political Libera[liza]tion in Egypt and the Demise of State Feminism', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 24, no. 2, pp. 231–51.

Hoffman, V. (1985) 'An Islamic Activist: Zaynab al-Ghazali: Translated from the Arabic by Valerie J. Hoffman', in *Women and the Family in the Middle East; New Voices of Change*, Warnock Fernea, E. (ed.). Austin: University of Texas Press, pp. 233–54.

—— (1987) 'Polemics on the Modesty and segregation of Women in Contemporary Egypt', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 23–50.

Ibrahim, S. (1980) 'Anatomy of Egypt's Militant Islamic Groups: Methodological Note and Preliminary Findings', *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 12, pp. 423–53.

Jansen, J. (1997) *The Dual Nature of Islamic Fundamentalism.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Kandiyoti, D. (1988) 'Bargaining with Patriarchy', *Gender and Society*, vol. 2, no. 3, pp. 274–90.

Lee, R. (1997) *Overcoming Tradition and Modernity: The Search for Islamic Authenticity.* Boulder: Westview.

Marcotte, R. (2003) 'How Far Have Reforms Gone in Islam?' *Women's Studies International Forum*, vol. 26, no. 2, pp.153–66.

Mernissi, F. (1993) *The Forgotten Queens of Islam*, Lakeland, M. J. (trans). Cambridge: Polity.

—— (1991) *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam*, Lakeland, M.J. (trans). Reading, Massachusetts: Addison–Wesley Pub. Co.

—— (1987) *Beyond the Veil: Male–Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press [original: Cambridge, MA: Schenkman Pub. Co.; New York: distributed solely by Halsted Press 1975].

Mir-Hosseini, Z. (2000) *Islam and Gender: The Religious Debate in Contemporary Iran*. London: I.B. Tauris.

—— (1993) *Marriage on Trial: A Study of Islamic Family Law. Iran and Morocco Compared*. London: I.B. Taurus.

Negus, S. (2000) 'A Chosen Identity. Columnist and Social Critic Heba Raouf Espouses Social Equality without Feminism and Islamic Values without Islamism', *Cairo Times*, 22–6 January, www.cairotimes.com/content/archiv03/raouf.html (accessed 21 June 2003).

Al-Qaradawi, Y. (2003a) 'The Islamic Movement and Women's Activity' /www.jannah.org/sisters/qaradawimov.html (accessed 22 October 2003).

—— (2003b) 'The Voice of Woman in Islam', www.jannah.org/sisters/qaradawi.html (accessed 18 June 2003).

—— (2000) Fatwa: 'The Philosophy of Marriage in Islam', www.islam-online.net/fatwa/english/FatwaDisplay.asp?hFatwaID=19352 (accessed 22 October 2003).

Qutb, S. (1996) *Social Justice in Islam,* in Shepard, W. (ed.), *Sayyid Qutb and Islamic Activism: A Translation and Critical Analysis of Social Justice in Islam*. Leiden: E.J. Brill.

—— *Milestones.* www.witness–pioneer.org/vil (accessed 22 July 2003).

Sayyid, B. (1997) *A Fundamental Fear: Eurocentrism and the Emergence of Islamism*. London: Zed Books.

Sonbol, A. (1996) 'Law and gender violence in Ottoman and modern Egypt', in Sonbol, A. (ed.) *Women, Family, and Divorce Laws in Islamic History*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996, pp. 277–89.

Stowasser, B. (2001) 'Old Shaykhs, Young Women, and the Internet: The Rewriting of Women's Political Rights in Islam', *The Muslim World*, vol. 91, no. 1/2, pp. 99–119.

Taraki, L. (1995) 'Islam Is the Solution: Jordanian Islamists and the Dilemma of the "Modern Woman"', *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 46, no. 4, pp. 643–61.

Taylor, C. (1999) *The Ethics of Authenticity* [original title: *The Malaise of Modernity*]. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Tibi, B. (2001) *Islam between Culture and Politics*. New York: Palgrave.

Tucker, J. (1998) 'Part II. Women in the Middle East and North Africa: The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', in Nashat, G. and Tucker, J. (eds), *Women in the Middle East and North Africa; Restoring Women to History*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, pp. 73–131.

Al-Turabi, H. (1973) *Women in Islam and Muslim Society*. www.Jannah.org (accessed 18 June 2003).

Voll, J. (1994) *Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

5   The war on terror and the 'rescue' of Muslim women

Shakira Hussein

Introduction

On 17 November 2001, as the Taliban regime in Afghanistan was being swept from power by Operation Enduring Freedom, First Lady Laura Bush made a radio address to the nation in a slot normally occupied by her husband. Her purpose, she announced, was to

> kick off a world-wide effort to focus on the brutality against women and children by the al-Qaeda terrorist network and the regime it supports in Afghanistan, the Taliban … Afghan women know, through hard experience, what the rest of the world is discovering: The brutal oppression of women is a central goal of the terrorists.[1]

Cherie Blair, too, joined this somewhat belated effort, saying, 'the women of Afghanistan have a spirit that belies their unfair, downtrodden image. We need to help them free that spirit and give them their voice back'.[2]

At first blush, the First Lady's condemnation of the Taliban may seem incontrovertible. There can be no doubting the brutality of the Taliban regime, or its particularly harsh effects on the lives of Afghan women. The Taliban's notorious restrictions on women's dress, employment, and mobility had disastrous effects on female income, health, and education. Taliban edicts ranged from the deadly – forbidding women to seek medical help from male doctors, while curtailing the ability of female doctors to work – to the merely petty (if grim), such as the edict enjoining women to walk noiselessly upon the streets lest male passions be aroused by the sound of their footsteps. Women were denied the right to work and study, and to go out in public unless accompanied by a male relative and dressed in the burqua that covered their entire body except for a mesh screen at eye level. Those found disobeying even trivial injunctions risked humiliation and injury from beatings in the street.

This essay seeks not to dispute Laura Bush's condemnation of the Taliban, but to open to debate the context in which her speech was made. In particular, it questions the morality of the military operation which was conducted

at least partially in the name of liberating Afghan women from the Taliban. Further, it seeks to draw attention to the oppression of women by American allies inside and outside Afghanistan, and to highlight the complicity of the United States and its allies in the disintegration of Afghanistan and the Islamisation of its neighbour Pakistan, with all the continuing implications these processes have for the lives of women. It concludes by contrasting the triumphalist claims that the United States' military intervention in Afghanistan 'liberated' women with the reality of women's lives in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Naming the enemy

Laura Bush's speech in support of Afghan women can be seen as part of an attempt to broaden the focus of American retaliation for 11 September to include the Taliban as well as al-Qaeda. In the weeks following 11 September, it became clear that al-Qaeda presented an elusive target – deterritorialised, able to disband and regroup, as much an idea as an organisation. Even the capture or killing of its central symbol and leader, Osama bin Laden, has thus far proved impossible. Overthrowing the Taliban, by contrast, formed a tangible and achievable goal, one that could go part of the way towards satisfying the American need for some form of retribution. The difficulty lay in the tenuous nature of the link between the Taliban and the 11 September attacks, as well as in the brutal nature of many of the anti-Taliban warlords alongside whom the United States was now allied. The positioning of Afghan women as helpless victims awaiting Western rescue helped to circumvent these difficulties, at least partially. Unlike the Northern Alliance, whose human rights record could only be described as spotty at best, Afghan women as a class could plausibly be classified as 'innocent'. Their plight served to distract attention from the fact that for the most likely perpetrators of the 11 September attacks, the downfall of the Taliban was a setback rather than a final defeat.

Both Laura Bush's speech, and the State Department report on which it draws, are at pains to state that Taliban atrocities against women are not endorsed by 'Islam': 'Islam is a religion that respects women and humanity. The Taliban respects neither.'[3] Yet in the absence of any alternative explanation, readers are left to infer that 'Islamic fundamentalism', rather than the social dysfunctionalism brought about by two decades of war, is responsible for the rise of an extremist regime such as the Taliban. This inference is unlikely to sound far-fetched to a Western audience exposed to years of neo-Orientalist representations of Islam as a religion of women-hating fanatics. At the same time, the report is careful to cordon off the situation of Afghan women from that of the women of 'friendly' Muslim states. Indeed, the report singles out Saudi Arabia for favourable mention, due to the high number of women undertaking formal education there. It does not mention the restrictions placed on the lives of these same women, forbidding them the rights to vote, drive a car, or control their own mobility. As Mai Ghassaub writes:

A woman can become rector of a university, yet be unable to travel abroad without the authorization of her male guardian – be he father, brother or husband … In these conditions, many women live in an unendurable frustration, having acquired the skills and knowledge of a modern education without ever being able to apply or use them.[4]

It is difficult not to conclude that Saudi Arabia owes its favourable representation in the State Department report less to its progressive attitude to women's rights than to its foreign policy alliance with the United States and the strategic value of its oilfields.

The official outpouring of support for Afghan women under the Taliban raises the obvious question as to why a similar concern is not expressed for women in 'friendly' Muslim (or non-Muslim, for that matter) states, such as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Saudi Arabia's female dress regulations are at least as rigorous as those of the Taliban, and as dangerous. In 2002, 15 girls were killed in Mecca when the religious police drove them back into their burning school because they were not adequately covered to go out in public.[5] In so-called 'moderate' Muslim nations such as Pakistan and Jordan, the state has allowed hundreds, if not thousands, of women to die in an epidemic of 'honour killings', crimes which receive only the most token of punishments, on the rare occasions that they are punished at all. Such endemic oppression of women has proved no barrier to friendly political and military relations with the United States and its allies. It can be argued that the Taliban's brutality towards women was such as to elevate it into a category of its own, requiring a uniquely forceful response. Laura Bush points to this Taliban exceptionalism in her radio address: '*Only* the terrorists and the Taliban forbid education to women. *Only* the terrorists and the Taliban threaten to pull out women's fingernails for wearing nail polish'.[6] But this does not begin to account for the breadth of the discrepancy between the United States' response to the Taliban and its relationships with other misogynist forces in the Islamic world. In fact, the history of such relationships has more often been characterised by collusion than by conflict.

The United States, Islamism, and women

The 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was a decisive turning point for women throughout the region, propelling to centre stage Islamist forces for whom the control of women was a prime concern. In both Afghanistan and Pakistan, the anti-Soviet campaign was conducted through the use of Islamist organisations who used the conflict to further their own agenda. For the Pakistani military regime of the time, the Soviet invasion could not have been better timed. President Zia ul-Haq had caused widespread shock by overthrowing and later executing his elected, if autocratic and corrupt, predecessor, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. But with the invasion of Afghanistan, the United States could no longer afford to be precious about such details. They

needed a friendly ally in the region. Not only did Pakistan become a major recipient of American military aid, it also became the conduit through which weapons were conveyed to the anti-Soviet Afghan *mujahadeen*. Rather than supply the *mujahadeen* directly, the United States chose to work through the Pakistani secret intelligence agency, the Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI). The ISI, in turn, favoured the Pakistani Islamist party, the *Jamaat-i-Islami*, and its Afghan ally, the *Hezb-i-Islami*, led by Gulbadin Hekmetyar, the warlord notorious for flinging acid in the faces of unveiled Kabul university students during the 1970s. More moderate forces within the Afghan resistance were marginalised, with the tacit agreement, if not outright approval, of the United States.

Both Laura Bush's radio address and the State Department report on which it is based suggest by omission that the oppression of Afghan women began with the Taliban's rise to power. In fact, the anti-women climate that reached its nadir under the Taliban was prefigured by the actions of the US-backed *mujahadeen* during the years of struggle against the Soviet occupation. In particular, a government programme directed at the compulsory education of girls was the target of widespread resistance, including the murder of literacy teachers.[7] In the refugee camps of Pakistan, too, the provision of welfare and education for women was hampered by harassment from the *mujahadeen* who were the ultimate beneficiaries of Western military aid, and Afghan women working for overseas aid organisations were subjected to organised intimidation. But with the *mujahadeen* cast as heroes in the struggle against communism, such activities attracted little international concern.

The lives of Afghan boys in the refugee camps were also to help define later events. Living in war-fractured families, in which established gender roles were seriously disrupted, for many the only available opportunity for education lay in the *madrasa*s (religious schools), sponsored by Pakistani religious parties. Many of these boys, raised in refugee camps where control of women was much more stringent than it may have been in their parents' home villages, and educated only in a particularly narrow version of Islam, would grow up to be the foot soldiers of the Taliban, or other equally misogynist warlords.

The years of civil war following the Soviet withdrawal further eroded women's welfare. The weapons that flowed so freely into the region during the years of Soviet occupation were now turned against the Afghan population. The West's erstwhile proxy, Gulbandin Hekmetyar, shelled Kabul into ruins. A generation of widows was forced into beggary to support themselves and their surviving families. Rape flourished amid the lawlessness of war. It is little wonder that when the Taliban began its advance, promising among other things to end the sexual abuse of women and boys by warlords, many ordinary Afghans – women as well as men – initially made it welcome.

In Pakistan, the Islamist parties' alliance with the military and their proxy role in the Afghan conflict gave them a political power far beyond their modest electoral support. President Zia ul-Haq sought political legitimacy

through a programme of Islamisation whose primary consequence was to render more vulnerable the lives of Pakistani women. Under the Law of Evidence, a woman's testimony was (and at the time of writing still is) held to be worth only half that of a man's. Prosecutions for *zena* (fornication) have fallen particularly heavily upon women, including rape victims, with the issue of consent considered irrelevant. Since pregnancy provides hard evidence of sexual activity, women who have become pregnant without a licit sexual partner have been prosecuted for *zena* while the men who impregnated them, often forcibly, escape punishment. Under Zia ul-Haq, the burden of transforming Pakistan into a model Islamic society was placed squarely on the shoulders of its women, who were enjoined to embrace *chador aur char diwari* – the *chador* and the four walls (of the home). As Farzana Bari writes, Zia ul-Haq 'did nothing to implement his much talked of Islamic reforms to introduce Islamic banking, Islamic system of punishment (except flogging) and interest free economy, etc. His Islam started with women and ended there.'[8] No government, either civilian or military, has so far shown sufficient political courage to overturn these ordinances in the years since Zia ul-Haq's assassination.

Both Afghanistan and Pakistan underwent deep transformation as a consequence of the Soviet occupation and the United States' response to it. The massive disruption to social life caused by years of militarisation and war provides the context in which the Taliban's rise to power should be seen, and in this context the United States is no innocent party. By arming the region's most extreme elements during the Soviet occupation, and then consigning it to oblivion with the end of the Cold War, the United States helped to create the oppressive conditions against which women continue to struggle.

Feminism, militarism, and resistance

The groundwork for the First Lady's speech had been laid well before 11 September, in a campaign initiated by the Feminist Majority Foundation and entitled 'Stop Gender Apartheid in Afghanistan'. This campaign, which claimed the support of a clutch of Hollywood celebrities, focused its attention exclusively upon the actions of the Taliban regime, despite the multiple sources of oppression for Afghan women. After 11 September, this campaign dovetailed with the propaganda campaign supporting Operation Enduring Freedom, in an unusual synthesis of feminism and militarism. The statements by Laura Bush and Cherie Blair, buttressed by a five-page State Department report,[9] signalled the rare event of gender issues breaking through to international politics from what is generally termed their more appropriate locus in the domestic sphere. Indeed, the assignment of gender to the area of 'low' politics is evident even here, in the fact that it was not the leaders themselves who took the spotlight, but their wives, who held no official position, but who could be presumed to hold an interest in women's issues by virtue of their own gender. The elevation of women's welfare to the sphere of international politics

was signalled throughout as provisional, exceptional, and temporary. This fluctuation of gender issues between the domestic and international realm allowed the United States to claim the right to intervene in the case of Afghanistan, while casting the women of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia (not to mention Afghan women after the fall of the Taliban) into the sphere of domestic politics, outside its area of concern.

The Western campaign on behalf of Afghan women was also conducted without regard to the concerns and agency of Afghan women themselves, who were cast in the role of silent victims. Instead, prominent Western women such as Oprah Winfrey, Mavis Leno (wife of talk show host Jay Leno), Laura Bush, and Cherie Blair were enlisted to speak out on their behalf. While Afghan women pointed to the abuse of women by the Northern Alliance as well as by the Taliban, their Western champions focused exclusively on Taliban abuses. This of course served Western strategic interests, which required the Northern Alliance to provide the canon fodder at the low-tech end of what was billed as a high-tech war, in which American casualties were kept to a minimum.

In the weeks following 11 September, the burqua-clad Afghan woman rapidly became one of the central symbols of the conflict. The burqua itself was fetishised, displayed in countless media montages, and snipped into blue squares which the Feminist Majority Foundation sold for $5, to be worn 'in solidarity' with Afghan women. As Sonali Kolhaktar writes: 'The post card on which the swatch of mesh is sold says, "Wear a symbol of remembrance for Afghan women", as if they are already extinct'.[10] In a performance of Eve Ensler's play, *Vagina Monologues*, a burqua was symbolically lifted to reveal the face of an Afghan woman – not by the woman herself ('Zoya', a member of the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA)), but by talk show host Oprah Winfrey. But in interviews,[11] Afghan women themselves tended to accord much less symbolic weight to the burqua. Some urban educated women did indeed object to the burqua on ideological grounds, while poor women complained about the economic burden of purchasing an extra garment, or objected not because they objected to covering per se, but because the burqua was not their preferred style of veiling. Many Afghan women cover not with the burqua, but with the *chador*, a long piece of cloth that covers the hair and torso and can be drawn across the face. Others favour the modern hijab, consisting of a headscarf and coat, found throughout the contemporary Islamic world. Such women may have resented having the burqua foisted upon them, but had no desire to unveil entirely. For others, the enforcement of the burqua either reflected existing social practice, or was regarded as a small price to pay for the improvement in law and order which the Taliban was initially able to bring to much of the country. In the light of these complexities, it is not surprising that Afghan women failed to fulfil Western expectations that with the fall of the Taliban they would immediately cast off their burquas in large numbers.

Similarly, education was a good which had been denied to the vast majority of Afghan women and girls (as well as to most Afghan men and boys, for that matter) long before the Taliban's rise to power, because of the massive social and economic disruption of war. Though Afghan women often did aspire to undertaking formal education, their more pressing concerns were for relatives killed and maimed, farms and homes destroyed, and basic needs of life denied. Education was hardly possible amid such destruction, even if it had been permitted. The perpetrators of such ruin were not only the Taliban, but also the warlords of the Northern Alliance who after 11 September became the United States' partners in waging war in Afghanistan.

Despite the apparently overwhelming odds stacked against the exercise of their agency, Afghan women were not mere passive victims, awaiting rescue from the West. On the contrary, they engaged in a wide variety of resistance, ranging from running clandestine home schools to wearing forbidden nail varnish and make-up. Perhaps best known were the efforts of members of RAWA, who used their burquas to conceal video cameras, with which they filmed Taliban beatings and executions. The footage thus obtained was then distributed to media outlets internationally. Less spectacular, but equally courageous, were the acts of everyday resistance carried out by women at a grassroots level. For example, women attending a literacy class in a refugee camp in Pakistan told of how they had banded together to confront a husband who had beaten his wife for attending the class. Eventually, they were able to shame him into allowing her to return.[12]

The mission to rescue Afghan women helped to mask the cold realpolitik underlying the United States' military intervention, which killed or maimed an unknown number of Afghan women and has thus far failed to deliver them from the rule of the warlords. When Afghan women spoke for themselves, it was often to denounce in no uncertain terms the Northern Alliance warlords whom the United States was in the process of returning to power.[13] They drew attention, too, to the civilian costs of Operation Enduring Freedom. Maryam, a village woman whose daughter was seriously injured in the bombing of Karam village, said:

> The Americans should know that they have killed a lot of very poor people. In every home in Karam there are some dead, and the survivors are sleeping in the open, in very bad conditions … But we have nothing to do with Osama bin Laden.[14]

Local voices, however, did not carry as far as did those of their more powerful self-appointed saviours in the West.

What has been the outcome for women?

In August 2002, in his message for Women's Equality Day, President Bush proclaimed:

> In Afghanistan, the Taliban used violence and fear to deny Afghan
> women access to education, health care, mobility, and the right to vote.
> Our coalition has liberated Afghanistan and restored fundamental human
> rights to Afghan women, and all the people of Afghanistan. Young girls
> in Afghanistan are able to attend schools for the first time.[15]

Yet if Operation Enduring Freedom was conducted in part in order to liberate
Afghan women, it can hardly be seen as an unqualified success. While there
have been improvements, notably the reopening of schools and universities to
those women and girls with the resources to attend, human rights organisa-
tions report endemic abuses of women's rights, especially outside of Kabul,
where the power of the central government is secondary to that of local war-
lords.[16] Pashtun women, as members of the ethnic group most closely
associated with the Taliban, have been the victims of retaliatory attacks,
including rape, in the wake of the Taliban's defeat. 'N' and her 14-year-old
daughter, ethnic Pashtun women living in Balkh city, were gang-raped by
Hazara soldiers of the *Hizb-i-Wahdat* party in December 2001. She told
Human Rights Watch:

> We cried and said that we are poor people with no enemies, so why are
> you doing these things to us. The commander said, 'It is our choice. You
> are Talib [a member of the Taliban] and you are Pashtun'.[17]

In Afghan society, rape of course results in shattering long-term social conse-
quences. As 'N' says, 'I am concerned about the future of my daughters. No
one will marry my daughters. There is nothing left for us; marriage and honor
is gone.'[18]

These revenge attacks, made in the immediate aftermath of the Taliban's
fall, did not signal the end of militarised rape in Afghanistan. Human Rights
Watch reports widespread continued rape, abduction, and forced marriage of
women and girls by soldiers and police.[19] The fear of such violence confines
many women to their homes as effectively as Taliban edicts ever did.

Afghan women are still being arrested for crimes such as adultery or marry-
ing without parental consent. Going out unveiled remains a risky business,
with the main effect of the Taliban's fall being to make acceptable other forms
of hijab besides the burqua. But the burqua, too, though no longer legally
mandated, is forcibly imposed in many areas, by both non-government and
government agents. In Herat, women found in the company of unrelated
males, including taxi drivers, have been subjected to humiliating medical
examinations in order to assess their chastity. Female education, too, is under
threat in Herat and elsewhere, with bans on mixed-sex schools combining
with a chronic shortage of female teachers to deprive women and girls of edu-
cation.[20] The Karzai government has upheld an old law barring married
women from high-school education, resulting in the expulsion of 'possibly two
or three thousand' women, according to the estimate of the deputy education

minister. The expulsions were justified by the alleged need to prevent the married students from discussing sex with their unmarried classmates.[21] Female education has also been the target of Afghanistan's continued violence, with girls' schools subjected to arson and rocket attacks. In some areas, there are reports of women and girls being intimidated and attacked for undertaking or attempting to undertake formal education.[22] Advocates for women's rights have likewise been threatened and assaulted.[23] But with the overthrow of the Taliban, gender issues have once again become a domestic concern, best dealt with by Afghans themselves.

In Pakistan, too, the outlook for women is grim. Although a core of educated, urban, middle- and upper-class women have built independent careers in high-status fields, many others suffer economic, social, and legal vulnerability. While President Musharraf has received much favourable comment in the West for his proclaimed commitment to 'enlightened moderation', it is still unclear when if ever this will translate into genuine progress on women's rights. Musharraf's supporters point to the election of a record number of women to the national parliament in 2002, after increased female representation was introduced to the existing quota system.[24] However, the system by which these quotas operate does not provide a solid base for strong female advocacy. Those chosen for the reserved seats are nominated by their political parties, not elected. Many of them are the female relatives of male politicians, chosen for their presumed quiescence. Some such women may eventually emerge as political figures in their own right, but their heavy dependence on the party machines which nominated them works against this. Nor are women parliamentarians necessarily more likely than their male colleagues to promote a feminist agenda. Some belong to the Islamist parties, and espouse an ultra-conservative ideology on social issues. Members of the feminist Aurat foundation report having approached Islamist women parliamentarians for assistance when their programmes came under attack from Islamist men. Even when sympathetic to the Aurat foundation's situation, the women parliamentarians were unable to prevail over their more powerful male counterparts.[25]

Although the Musharraf government has undertaken a review of the Hudood Ordinance, under which so many Pakistani women have been imprisoned for real or supposed sexual misconduct, this was widely regarded as a substitute for any real action.[26] The review, like others before it, recommended the repeal of the Ordinance, but it remains unclear what changes, if any, will eventuate. This is especially so given the strong electoral gains made in October 2002 by the Islamic parties gathered under the banner of the *Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal* (MMA), an alliance which successfully rode a tide of anti-US feeling generated by the war on terror. Analyses labelling this development as the 'Talibanisation' of Pakistan are overly simplistic. (Musharraf himself has been able to consolidate international support by depicting his regime as a bulwark against Islamic fundamentalism, as represented by the MMA.) The MMA is a more heterogeneous movement than the Taliban; for

example, the women's wing of one of its major member parties, the *Jamaat-i-Islami*, includes many women with forthright opinions and graduate or post-graduate level education. While the women's wing occupies a subordinate position within the party, its members are nonetheless highly active in welfare and educational work; though they may be veiled, they are scarcely invisible.[27] However, alongside the JI women's strongly stated commitment to female education is a conservative outlook in the crucial area of legal reform. JI women activists staged a well-publicised protest demonstration outside Parliament opposing the suggested repeal of the Hudood Ordinance.[28] Such a recommendation was, they asserted, 'the suggestion and opinion of few Westernised women on the nation contrary to the will of a majority of women'.[29]

   The electoral resurgence of the Islamist parties has led to a number of disturbing developments, especially in the North West Frontier Province, where the MMA is in government, and has declared shari'a law (a move whose implications are limited to some degree by the fact that this is legislation at a provincial and not a national level). So far, this has resulted in bans on the playing of music in public transport, the treatment of women by male doctors,[30] and the wearing of Western-style school uniforms. Compulsory prayer has been introduced for civil servants; women are being urged, none too tactfully, to cover; and the gender segregation of education is planned. There has been a struggle between the MMA and the Aurat Foundation, a secular women's NGO, for control of the province's only shelter for abused women.[31] Perhaps of most concern are plans for establishing a 'Department of Vice and Virtue' to enforce Islamic conduct. And in cities across Pakistan, Islamic youths used black paint to obliterate female faces from advertising and cinema billboards.

Conclusion

The war on terror has brought the Islamic world, including its women, under greater Western scrutiny than perhaps ever before. This presents Muslim women with the opportunity to focus international attention upon their struggles. However, this opportunity is likely to prove double-edged. On the most basic of physical levels, women are likely to number among the casualties of any future military or terrorist strikes. But they are likely, also, to find themselves weighed down more heavily by the demands of their conscripted role as guardians of their societies' honour. Anger against Western imperialism has historically been displaced as anger against 'Westoxified' women who step outside of their prescribed social role. The imagined link between feminism and Western hegemony has proved difficult to break. Those speaking out in favour of women's rights in Muslim societies are often labelled as collaborators with Western imperialism. Friction between Western and Muslim societies can only heighten the cultural chauvinism which demands that women bear their oppression in silence, rather than provide the enemy with more propaganda by speaking out.

By the time of Laura Bush's speech, the Taliban regime she was denouncing was all but finished. With its fall, the oppression of Muslim women lost much of its prominence on the international agenda. Yet Muslim women's welfare continues to be intimately bound up with geopolitical relations between Muslim and Western societies. As the Afghan and Pakistani examples show, the status of women is determined not simply by the strictures of 'Islam', but by a complex mix of socio-political factors in which international relations play a vital component, and in which the United States does not necessarily play the role of liberator.

Notes

1 www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/11/2011117.html (accessed 15 November 2003).
2 'Cherie Blair pleads for Afghan women', *Guardian*, 20 November 2001.
3 'Report on the Taliban's War Against Women', US Department of State, www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/6183pf.htm (accessed 15 November 2003).
4 Ghoussoub (1987), pp. 3–19.
5 'Saudi Police "Stopped" Fire Rescue' www.news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/1874471.stm (accessed 15 November 2003).
6 www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/11/20011117.html, (accessed 15 November 2003) (my emphases).
7 Moghadam (1992).
8 Bari (2002).
9 www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/6183pf.htm (accessed 15 November 2003).
10 Kokhatkar (2002).
11 Conducted in Peshawar, Pakistan, in 2000 and 2001.
12 Interviews conducted in Peshawar, October 2000.
13 For example, RAWA stated with characteristic forthrightness that 'the existence of the NA as a military force would shatter the joyful dream of the majority for an Afghanistan free from the odious chains of barbaric Taliban'. www.rawa.fancymarketing.net/na-appeal.htm (accessed 15 November 2003).
14 Interview conducted in Peshawar, Pakistan, 2001.
15 'Women's Equality Day 2002: A Proclamation by the President of the United States', www.usinfo.state.gov/usa/women/rights/082402.htm (accessed 15 November 2003).
16 *We Want to Live As Humans: Repression of Women and Girls in Western Afghanistan*, Human Rights Watch, www.hrw.org/reports/2002/afghnwmn1202/, December 2002 (accessed 15 November 2003).
17 *Anti-Pashtun violence in Northern Afghanistan – Recent Testimonies*, Human Rights Watch, www.hrw.org/press/2002/03/pashtuntestimony.htm, 6 March, 2002 (accessed 15 November 2003).
18 Ibid.
19 *Killing You is a Very Easy Thing For Us: Human Rights Abuses in South-Eastern Afghanistan*, Human Rights Watch, www.hrw.org/reports/2003/afghanistan0703/, July 2003, vol. 15, no. 05 (C) (accessed 15 November 2003).
20 *We Want to Live as Humans; Killing You is a Very Easy Thing For Us*, Human Rights Watch, www.hrw.org/reports/2003/afghanistan0703/12.htm, July 2003 (accessed 22 March 2005).
21 Institute for War and Peace Reporting, Afghan Recovery Report no. 80, 5 November 2003, www.iwpr.net/index.pl?archive/arr/arr_200311_80_2_eng.txt (accessed 15 November 2003).
22 'Girls' Schools Become Targets', Institute for War and Peace Reporting, 24 June 2004, www.iwpr.net/index.pl?archive/arr/arr_200406_123_1_eng.txt; and *Killing You is a Very Easy Thing For Us*.

23 Ibid.
24 Totalling 17 per cent in the Senate, 18 per cent in the National Assembly. At the local level, 33 per cent of seats are reserved for women.
25 Interviews conducted in Lahore and Peshawar, 2004.
26 'NGOs sceptical about discussions on Hudood law', *Dawn*, 26 March 2003.
27 Interviews conducted in Lahore and Islamabad, 2000, 2001, and 2004.
28 Some individual JI women, however, privately express reservations regarding the Hudood Ordinance, based on the discriminatory nature of its implementation, and on the fact that many women imprisoned as a result almost certainly did not commit the acts of which they are accused. One JI member explained that she could not support the implementation of the Hudood Ordinance by a legal system that continued to be dominated by 'un-Islamic' corruption and nepotism (interview conducted in Islamabad, October 2001).
29 'Repeal of Hudood Ordinance Opposed', *Dawn*, 6 September 2003.
30 This edict has thus far proved impossible to enforce due to a chronic shortage of female medical specialists.
31 'House Hunted by the MMA', *Friday Times*, 29 August 2003.

References

Bari, E. (2002) 'Showing the real face', *The News*, 11 November.

Ghoussoub, M. (1987) 'Feminism – or the Eternal Masculine – in the Arab World', *New Left Review*, vol. 161, pp. 3–19.

Kokhatkar, S. (2002) '"Saving" Afghan Women', *Znet*, 9 May.

Moghadam, V. (1992) 'Revolution, Islam and Women: Sexual Politics in Iran and Afghanistan', in Parker, A. *et al*. (1992) *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, New York: Routledge.

6 Islam and identity in South Asia

At the crossroads of confusion and confrontation?

Howard V. Brasted

In May 2002 Salman Rushdie described the Indian subcontinent as 'the most dangerous place in the world'.[1] This was no overstatement. Having gone to war on three previous occasions – in 1948, 1965 and 1971 – India and Pakistan seemed poised to go to total war over Kashmir. A fierce military skirmish in the mountainous Kargil sector dividing Indian and Pakistani Kashmir had set the scene for this in 1999. This time they confronted each other not only with conventional armed force, with more than a million troops massing along their joint border,[2] but also with nuclear missiles strategically targeted to inflict maximum destruction. India's Bharitya Janata Party (hereafter BJP) government, which had previously acknowledged an Indian pledge never to be the first to launch such an attack, provocatively demanded the right to conduct a 'defensive' pre-emptive strike reminiscent of the doctrine George W. Bush had enunciated justifying unilateral US intervention against regimes it considered hostile.[3] The prospect of the world's first nuclear war loomed large.

On 27 February 2002, the hands of the 'Doomsday Clock', a symbolic gauge measuring the threat of nuclear war, were moved for the first time in nearly four years. The *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, which maintains the wooden mock-up clock in its office at Chicago University, set the hands at 11:53, two minutes closer to the 'midnight' or nuclear hour.[4] Just twelve years earlier, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, 'midnight' had been deemed to be seventeen minutes away. It was reported that what had triggered the time adjustment by the *Bulletin* was not the 11 September attacks by al-Qaeda terrorists on the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, but a Muslim terrorist assault on the Indian parliament on 13 December 2001 and the renewed tensions over Kashmir.

Those tensions were compounded by internal unrest in India itself. On the very day the 'Doomsday Clock' was adjusted, 57 Hindus returning from a pilgrimage to Ayodhya in commemoration of the 1992 demolition of a sixteenth-century mosque – deemed by them to have been built on top of an ancient temple marking the birthplace of the god Ram – were ambushed in Gujarat and burnt to death on the Sabarmarti express. Soon after, outbreaks of communal violence between Hindus and Muslims broke out across northern

India. With Muslims bearing the brunt of this retaliatory onslaught, casualties ran into several thousands. Stoking the fires further, Hindu nationalists placed a 15 March deadline for work to begin on the construction of a new Hindu temple on the site of the Babri mosque, while also demanding that many other Muslim structures – including the Taj Mahal – be pulled down. India's size-able Muslim minority of 12 per cent of the population were openly branded not only as foreigners, but also prospective traitors and fifth columnists in the event of war with Pakistan. Communal intolerance had reached flash point.

As in 1993 when Mumbai, the commercial capital of India, was rocked by a bombing blitz of hotels and business landmarks such as the Bombay Stock Exchange, it was subjected to a new wave of random blasts beginning in December 2002. The worst of these occurred on 25 August 2003, when two car bombs were detonated in the heart of the city, at the historic 'Gateway of India' and at a popular gold and jewellery market, killing over 50 people and wounding 150 more. Significantly, this bombing coincided with the release of a report by the Archaeological Survey of India, which had found evidence of substantial – though still indeterminate – ruins under those of the Babri mosque in Ayodhya. While no one claimed responsibility for this attack and India did not rush to point the finger at Pakistan,[5] as it had done following the assault on its parliament and on other occasions, the banned Students' Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) was openly suspected. It had been blamed for the earlier incidents and was reputedly connected to the militant, Pakistan-based *Lashkar-e-Taiba*, which was at the centre of fighting against Indian security forces in Kashmir. Jack Straw, Britain's Foreign Secretary, seized on the episode as evidence of the 'poison of international terrorism' from which no country was immune.[6]

That the governments of Pakistan and India have recently found them-selves allies of the US in the overthrow of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the 'fight against terrorism' cannot disguise the fact that they primarily regard each other as traditional adversaries, a perspective more likely in time to widen than weaken – for the seeds of future disharmony are being sown in school textbooks and the world-views they construct. In often quite fanciful and fictive accounts of the subcontinent's past, Hindus are being portrayed as the eternal enemy in Pakistan's classrooms, and Muslims as the eternal enemy in India's classrooms.[7] Mutually disparaging reductionist depictions abound. In reality Pakistan remains apprehensive of India's military capability, and India's suspicion of Pakistan as a safe haven for Muslim Jihadist groups and the secret underwriter of the Taliban's notorious brand of Islam has not been dislodged. Dislike and distrust have become axiomatic features of their bilat-eral relationship.

What is happening and what forces are at work in South Asia to engender such an explosively dangerous situation? From a distance the confrontation between Pakistan and India and between Muslims and Hindus might appear to accord with Huntington's controversial and still fiercely contested 'clash of civilisations' thesis on how the post-Cold War world will be shaped and who

will shape it. This advances the proposition that the next global order will be remade through civilisational conflict, 'not between social classes, rich and poor, or other economically defined groups, but between people belonging to different cultural entities'.[8] Identifying seven or eight such 'cultural entities' or 'civilisations'[9] in his distinctly apocalyptic model of future international relations, Huntington points to the Islamic and Western protagonists as those most likely to determine the future configurations of life and governance on earth. But at the regional level an Islamic–Hindu 'clash' ostensibly fits his prescription of civilisational engagement more closely. For in their history of encounter to date the Muslims and Hindus of South Asia have already come to blows at three key fault lines of contact Huntington maps out: religious culture, disputed territory, and national identity.

With respect to the first, Muslims and Hindus 'clashed' in most bitter and violent fashion when they separated in 1947 to establish sovereign states with the ending of British imperial rule. They separated on the grounds advanced by Muhammad Ali Jinnah – the prime mover of Pakistan – in his presidential address to the All-India Muslim League at Lahore in March 1940, that Muslims and Hindus not only subscribed to 'two different religious philosophies', they also fundamentally belonged to 'two different civilisations'. Proclaiming that Muslims would be in danger and their 'distinct social order' would be compromised in a plural state dominated by Hindus, Jinnah argued that they should therefore live securely apart rather than incompatibly together.[10] Bequeathing a legacy of recrimination and hostility, the subsequent cataclysmic partitioning of the subcontinent – or its 'vivisection' as Gandhi called it – was accompanied by a transmigration and exchange of millions of Muslim and Hindu refugees across suddenly formed and violent borders. Although the exact figures are unknown, possibly a million died in this uprooting of population. In the event the problem of inter-communal relations and religious culture was not so much resolved by this bitter division as rendered more complex. Thirty million Muslims – or 10 per cent of the population – chose not to leave India or were unable to do so and were scattered in significant clusters, particularly in the North. While India continued to face the domestic challenge of integrating a still sizeable if smaller and more dispersed minority of Muslims, Pakistan promoted itself as their protector internationally, a sure recipe for engendering confrontation between them.

Second, from day one of their independent existence Pakistan and India began to 'clash' over the former's territorial claim to Jammu and Kashmir, which acceded to India despite its predominantly Muslim population. Irrespective of the rights and wrongs of the claim, Kashmir has not only constituted a 'bloody' border between Pakistan and India for 56 years,[11] it also brings into symbolic relief the reasons the two countries officially divided at birth. As a homeland designed specifically to safeguard Muslim culture, Pakistan believed that Muslim majority princely states like Kashmir would automatically be placed into their care and control, or opt to join their fellow religionists if given a democratic choice. That neither of these things happened

and Pakistan emerged more 'moth-eaten' than it was entitled to expect has rankled ever since, and serves to explain the unrelenting *mujahidin* terrorist-style campaign in the state against continued Indian rule. Despite periods of truce and rapprochement, contesting the fate and ultimate destination of Kashmir by insurgent or any other means looks set to keep Pakistan and India on a direct collision course indefinitely.

Third, Pakistan and India are precariously poised to 'clash' again over their respective quests to discover the underlying bases of national identity that define them and set them apart. Far from ending at Partition this search has entered a highly volatile phase. While Pakistan and India started off their journeys along diametrically opposite paths in 1947, the one propelled by religious nationalism, the other to establish the world's largest secular democracy, they appear now to be travelling in a parallel direction. Although still well short of its Islamic destination, Pakistan is constantly under Islamising pressures to reach it. And with the Hindu-aligned BJP overtaking the once dominant 'secular' Congress party as the largest all-India party, a new religiously exclusive India beckons, in which nationality and citizenship are measured ultimately in terms of Hinduness. *Hindutva*, the political platform on which the BJP stands, defines the nation as a primordial Hindu community bound together by a common history and a civilisation which transcends differences of region, language and culture. This movement thus threatens to disqualify millions of Muslims, and other non-Hindus, from belonging to the Indian nation, and renders them 'un-Indian' unless they seriously compromise their 'Muslimness' or 'Otherness' or abandon them altogether.[12] In short, Islam and Hinduism have potentially reached the ultimate crossroads of alienation within India itself.

On closer inspection, however, 'civilisation' theory falls well short of explaining the prospect of an Islamising Pakistan and a Hinduising India dangerously converging at any of these intersections. This is not to deny that Islam and Hinduism are the salient features in the subcontinental landscape and have been instrumental in determining its cultural and geo-political contours. Because of the way they interacted in the twentieth century, the subcontinent was partitioned, communal identities were sharpened, and ethnic and language differences took on a new prominence. But Islam and Hinduism have yet to behave as monolithic 'tribal' groupings[13] or to demonstrate the homogenising capacity to do so. Theirs has been such a mosaic of ethnic, regional and language variation that much of the conflict that has occurred at the level of belief and practice has been within civilisations rather than necessarily between them. While Islam, for instance, may have given Pakistan an irresistible momentum in 1946–7, it proved incapable of stopping its Eastern Bengal wing from breaking away to become Bangladesh in 1971. It has also so far failed to provide the ideological coherence and inclusionary nationalism capable of reconciling the major ethnic and regional Punjabi, Sindhi, Baloch, Pukhtun and Muhajir divisions that remained in the Western wing. Likewise in India if the BJP swept into government in 1998

and 1999 on a groundswell of Hindu nationalism, *Hindutva* made little inroad in the South and East, and has recently begun to encounter significant resistance even in its northern strongholds.

A number of questions begging explanation arise. Does Islam possess some primordial disposition that renders its relationship with other cultural systems – Hinduism in this case – difficult at the best of times and ultimately irreconcilable? Or are less intrinsic, more instrumental, agencies involved? What influence has so-called fundamentalist or rather Islamist Islam had in exacerbating this breakdown of relations and bringing them to the brink of explosion? Going back to the early nineteenth century, there is clear evidence of a 'composite culture', which the Indian constitution of 1950 has enshrined as an intrinsic aspect of the post-colonial state.[14] Far from existing in some pristine Arabist form, Islam emerged then as very much a 'syncretic weave of Muslim and Hindu religious and social practices and beliefs'.[15] So long as outside agencies let it alone, Islam enjoyed a degree of fusion with Hinduism, though predominantly at the folk or popular level. But when orthodox elements intervened to purify 'low' or 'lived' Islam of Hindu accretions, religious syncretism was too frail to survive for long.[16] The British colonial state did the rest. It conditioned Muslims and Hindus to think, act and compete politically as distinct religious communities. The road from separate electorates to separate states was not unerringly straight, but it was a connecting one.

For students of Islam, South Asia emerges as a pertinent and instructive setting not only for investigating the politicisation of religion in the region, but also for testing broader generalisations about the role and impact of Islam in the modern world. While the Indian subcontinent has rarely figured in generalist studies of global Islam, approximately 400 million Muslims or over one-third of all Muslims live there. This is double the number of Arab Muslims in the Middle East, the usual and still prevailing marker from which scholars tend to plot the universal trends of Islamic movement. The South Asia context of Islam, moreover, provides a number of windows through which to observe and seek clues about the development of religious identities, the reasons they are forged, and the different forms they take. Dispersed amongst Pakistan, Bangladesh and India, South Asia's Muslims present three broadly differentiated faces of Islam and confront quite different economic, social and political predicaments.[17] In Pakistan, 145 million Muslims constitute a majority of 97 per cent of the population but are divided by language and ethnicity; in Bangladesh, 118 million Muslims outnumber a Hindu minority of 11 per cent but share the same language and culture; and in India, 125 million Muslims form a minority of 12 per cent but, like the vast majority of Hindus amongst whom they live, are separated by language, culture and region. To address these questions and to put the problem of contemporary Muslim identity into perspective, it is to the past that this chapter first turns.

One aspect emerges very clearly in extracting the story of religious nationalism and cultural confrontation from the political histories of Pakistan,

Bangladesh and India. After over half a century of independent existence all three countries continue to contest the essential bases of identity and to debate the ideological underpinnings of nation that inform them. Their situations appear quite paradoxical. Although created in the name of Islam, Pakistan has yet to Islamise 'to anyone's satisfaction' to quote Ayesha Jalal.[18] Bangladesh, which separated from Pakistan on the grounds of its Bengali culture, appears to be falling back on the unifying force of Islam. And India, which embraced secularism from the start, has launched a significant attempt to reorient itself along distinct Hindu lines. With no precisely plotted or publicly mandated road maps to guide them, their routes have been often circuitous and seldom certain.

Pakistan[19]

This has been particularly true of Pakistan. According to Rafique Zakaria the reason Pakistan has not reached its final or any Islamic destination is because it has always been 'ambivalent' about the position Islam would occupy in the state.[20] Indeed, serious doubts about the need for Pakistan and its likely Islamic composition began well before 1947. Not only did Muslims who sought to remain in India challenge the logic of the 'Two Nation' theory and the necessity of separation, but so also did orthodox *ulama*, including Abul Ala Mawdudi, who suspected that the leaders of the Pakistan movement had little understanding of Islam and no commitment to it. Like many who envisaged Muslims forming a pan-Islamic community at the time, he fervently believed that dividing them into territorially separate nation-states was contrary to the political ideal of Islam.

Critically, Pakistan's Muslim League leadership failed to set a coherent and clear itinerary for the fledgling state. Jinnah, whose road sense had unerringly guided the majority of India's Muslims to a separate homeland, never clearly defined Pakistan before August 1947 and gave very mixed and contradictory directions about its constitutional and ideological shape immediately after. In his famous speech on 11 August 1947 to the constituent assembly of Pakistan charged with the task of delivering a constitution, he declared that:

> You may belong to any religion or creed – that has nothing to do with the business of the State … you will find that in course of time Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense, because that is the personal faith of each individual, but in the political sense as citizens of the State.

This seemingly overturned his pre-Partition platform that it was a 'dream that Hindus and Muslims (could) ever evolve a common nationality' and conjured up the vision of a secular Pakistan.[21] On other occasions he could assure his audience that Pakistan's democracy would be founded on the basis of Islamic ideals and principles.[22] But while it is most unlikely that Jinnah ever

countenanced the possibility of Pakistan becoming a theocracy or the *ulama* directing its affairs, the 'sole spokesman' for Pakistan died before he could dispel the outstanding ambiguities.[23]

With various spokesmen after Jinnah's death propounding differing and contrary specifications for Pakistan, ideological conflict was soon added to the ideological confusion he had bequeathed. The *ulama* demanded a theocratic state in which God was the ultimate sovereign and temporal rulers derived their legitimacy by implementing the divine will and legislating in conformity with the shari'a. Mawdudi went a step further by insisting that since Pakistan had become a reality, it was now incumbent upon Muslims to make it a model Islamic state. This meant investing all authority in a religious leader who would exercise dictatorial control over its legislative, judicial and executive functions. Against this, the Governor General, Ghulam Muhammad, declared that Pakistan was to be a secular and democratic state, and his Interior Minister, Iskander Mirza, who would later become the first president, issued a pointed warning that 'religion and politics should be kept apart otherwise there (would) be chaos'.[24]

Neither Liaquat Ali Khan – Pakistan's first prime minister – nor any other Muslim League leader was able to bridge this yawning divide. The Objectives Resolution, which he moved in the constituent assembly on 7 March 1949 and which was passed on 25 March, privileged Islam, but it also upheld fundamental principles that presaged a democratic form of government where 'chosen representatives of the people' would exercise 'power and authority'.[25] As a declaration of intent the Objectives Resolution neither resolved the relationship between politics and religion, nor reconciled secularists and Islamists to the form Pakistan would take.

The impasse was presciently outlined in the Munir Report on a violent campaign which Mawdudi and the *Jamaat-i-Islami* had instigated against the Ahmadi communities on the grounds of heretical belief.[26] Confronting the dilemma of an Islamic state in modern times the report pointed to Muslims 'standing on the crossroads' because their leaders did not have 'a clear conception of the goal and the means to reach it'. Even among the *ulama* there was no fundamental agreement about what an Islamic state was or who was a Muslim. As the report concluded, 'opposing principles, if left to themselves, can only produce confusion and disorder', and pressing 'Islam into service to solve situations it was never intended to solve' would result in 'frustration and disappointment'.[27] On both counts Muhammad Munir, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, was proved right.

Constitutionally and legally Pakistan has struggled to either separate or fuse the sacred and the secular. When a constitution finally emerged in 1956 after nine years of political wrangling, it was an incongruent combination of secular provisions – based on the British Government of India Act of 1935 – and Islamic precepts.[28] Although Pakistan was declared to be an Islamic Republic where no law repugnant to the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* could be enacted, Islam was not made the official religion of the state. The *ulama*

immediately dismissed Pakistan's first constitution as a betrayal of Islam, and by imposing martial law to forestall any possible diminution of military–bureaucratic dominance, President Iskander Mirza abrogated it before it came into effect. The second constitution, sponsored by the military regime of General Ayub Khan in 1962, initially diminished the role of Islam in its first draft but ended up in final form little different from its predecessor.[29] The third 1973 constitution in post-Bangladesh Pakistan, a constitution which was introduced by the civilian Bhutto government and unanimously signed by all elected representatives, declared Islam to be the official religion of the state for the first time, restricted the head of state and the prime minister to Muslims, and stipulated that 'all existing laws shall be brought in conformity with the injunctions of Islam'. However, under what was vaguely called 'Islamic socialism' by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Pakistan was primed not for civilian or Islamic rule but authoritarian or military regimes. Zia ul Haq's constitutional amendment of 1985, which gave the president the discretionary power to override as well as dismiss an elected prime minister, practically guaranteed this.

Never going far enough for the religious elements, the Islamisation ushered in by these constitutions always seemed to go too far for other interest groups. While the *ulama* and the *Jamaat-i-Islami* initially welcomed Pakistan's third constitution, they subsequently led a campaign of Islamic fervour under the slogan '*Nizam-i-Mustafa*' (Administration of the Chosen One; i.e. the Prophet Muhammad) to topple Bhutto, the most Westernised of Pakistan's rulers. That Bhutto shut down nightclubs, banned gambling and liquor, made Friday, instead of Sunday, the weekly holiday, and declared the Ahmadis non-Muslim failed to endear him to the fundamentalists he had sought to satisfy. He was eventually deposed in another army coup and replaced by General Zia ul Haq, the self-styled 'soldier of Islam', whom ironically Bhutto had recruited from the *Jamaat-i-Islami* to become chief of the army.

Taking advice from Mawdudi on how the state should be run and associating a large number of *ulama* with his administration, Zia introduced an austere programme of Islamisation that seemed calculated to purge Pakistan of secularism. A very brutal and intolerant system of governance resulted, which saw political parties banned as un-Islamic, certain punishments prescribed in the Qur'an introduced, shari'a benches established in high courts and the supreme court, and discriminatory laws fall heavily on women and religious minorities.[30] The Hudood Ordinance of 1979 with respect to adultery (*zina*) and rape (*zina-ul-jibr*), for example, rather than protecting women, actually made them more vulnerable to patriarchal control. Denied the right to bring charges against rapists, women had to depend on the exclusive testimony of males, a system open to abuse and exploitation. Similar disadvantage prevailed in cases dealing with 'blood money' for murder (*diyat*) and 'retribution' (*qisas*) under a 1984 law, which halved the value of both female evidence and female entitlement. In the case of religious minorities, a 1978 amendment to the electoral system changed the notion of equal citizenship by not

only creating separate electorates for non-Muslims, but also denying them the right to vote for Muslim candidates. Just before his death in an air crash in August 1988, Zia issued an ordinance which would virtually have made the shari'a the supreme law of Pakistan.

When popular opinion was eventually tested through elections to the national assembly and the four provincial assemblies, secularists, although only allowed to stand as individuals, nonetheless trounced their religious rivals. New general elections after Zia confirmed that the popular mood was very much against his brand of Islamisation. Symbolically they brought not only a woman in Benazir Bhutto to office, but also one who had been labelled the enemy of Islam. In her speeches she had stated that genuine economic and political rights, not bogus Islamic prescriptions designed 'to fool the poor and the downtrodden', were what Pakistan needed.[31] Subsequently harried by the religious opposition throughout her first, brief 20-month tenure,[32] Bhutto was unable to introduce a single piece of legislation or remove even the anti-female elements of Zia's laws. Sacked by the president in 1990, she was replaced by Mian Nawaz Sharif,[33] who trod more warily around the *ulama* and was less averse to conceding ground to them when he needed religious support.

It emerges very clearly from this history that all rulers, with the possible exception of Benazir Bhutto, have attempted to 'press Islam into service' to legitimate their regimes and justify their repression. Nawaz Sharif was the last elected leader, and Pervez Musharraf the latest to do this. Sharif's proposed fifteenth amendment to the constitution would have given the prime minister of the day the power to interpret and enforce the shari'a. Thus different kinds of Islam have been proffered to serve different political interests at different times. In sequence a number of contesting Islams have emerged:[34] a 'liberal–modernist Islam'; Ayub Khan's 'developmental Islam'; Yahya Khan's 'nationalist Islam'; Bhutto's 'socialist–populist Islam'; Zia's 'revivalist–fundamentalist Islam'; Sharif's 'civil theocratic Islam';[35] and so on. Despite the fact that religious parties have traditionally carried little electoral punch, they possess a 'street power' to foment such civil and sectarian violence that no government can safely ignore them.[36] Accordingly, if there has been some retreat from Islamisation over the last decade or so – cutting off *madrasas* (religious colleges) from state funding for instance – there has been no significant abandonment.

When 'pressed into service' in 1947, the appeal of Islam successfully mobilised the masses behind the Pakistan movement and outdistanced regional opposition to Jinnah's Muslim League. Answering the call of 'Islam in danger', Muslims across the subcontinent were able to suspend their ethnic and linguistic differences to defend Islam as a way of life. But after Pakistan was achieved and Islam saved from the perceived Hindu enemy it was found difficult to maintain this new-found sense of national identity. Early moves after 1947 to establish Urdu and Islam as the twin markers of a composite nationality failed badly to unify 'a fragmented conglomeration of people' separated by language, customs, ethnicity and 1000 miles of hostile territory

between its Western and Eastern wings.[37] When Urdu – the mother tongue of Indian Muslim refugees – was peremptorily made the national language of Pakistan it aroused fierce regional, particularly majority Bengali, opposition. Likewise when Islam was invoked, it always seemed more calculated to establish and entrench the dominance of a politically strong Punjabi–Muhajir alliance than to ensure an equitable sharing of power with the regions. The notorious 'One Unit' scheme, which sought to neutralise Bengal's numerical strength by preventing representation on the basis of population, fanned the flames of regional dissatisfaction even more.[38] It is little wonder that in 1956 Hasan Suhrawardy, Pakistan's only Bengali prime minister, declared the two-nation theory invalid, and the notion of an Islamic bond uniting the regions of Pakistan as utterly 'fatuous'.[39] These disputes went to the very heart of Pakistan's 'frustration' and 'confusion' over Islamic ideology and national identity.

Despite claiming its legitimacy from Islam, Pakistan remains as 'ambivalent' now about its Islamic status and its constitutional shape as it was at the very start. In words reminiscent of those of Chief Justice Munir nearly half a century earlier, General, now President, Pervez Musharraf, poignantly conceded this in an address to the nation on 17 October 1999:

> Pakistan today stands at the crossroads of its destiny – a destiny which is in our hands to make or break. Fifty-two years ago, we started with a beacon of hope and today that beacon is no more and we stand in darkness.[40]

For Musharraf the nation had reached the point of no return and would have to make a determination, one way or the other, about the ideological basis of the state. The question posed at Partition about whether Pakistan was to be an Islamic state or a liberal–democratic state run by Muslims still awaits an answer. Whether that answer presages continued military dictatorship, democratic civil government, or some agreed form of Islamic rule, remains to be seen. The path Musharraf intends to go down may be gauged from the 29 amendments he made unilaterally to the constitution on 21 August 2002 that gave him unfettered power over the democratic process,[41] his banning of several Islamic parties,[42] and his expressed hostility to an 'intolerant' theocratic Pakistan.[43] His statement that Pakistan would first have to be made 'strong and powerful' if Islam was to be 'served' better suggests greater not less military supervision of politics. Perhaps a Musharraf 'moderate–modernist Islam' is in the making.[44] In all likelihood the struggle for power between dominant Punjabi and other provincial groups will persist in some form or another,[45] and Islam, whose impact overall has been exclusionary rather than inclusionary, will continue to fail as an instrument of national integration.[46]

Bangladesh

Nowhere was this exclusionary impact more manifest than in East Pakistan. Despite a vast majority of Bengali Muslims voting for Pakistan and an Islamic homeland in 1946–7, they turned their back on both twenty-five years later. Like many of Pakistan's ethnic divisions, Bengal's Muslim leaders supported Pakistan not necessarily because they were converted to the ideal of an Islamic state, or even a united Muslim state, but because they saw Pakistan as a necessary stepping stone to achieving their own state.[47] It should be remembered that a federation of independent states had been the objective embodied in the Lahore Resolution of 1940. While Islam had sunk deep roots in Bengal, Bengali Muslims also had a deep attachment to their own language and culture, which helped to create a certain commonality with Hindus in the province, and a strong sense of distinctive ethnicity. This had been hinted at in April 1947 when leaders of the provincial Muslim League and Indian National Congress entered a last-minute bid to create an independent and united, rather than partitioned, Bengal.[48] In the rush of the moment the move stalled, but it revealed a Bengali nationalist sentiment that could potentially overtake any religious commitment to Pakistan.

That potential was soon realised as West Pakistan began to alienate its more populous Eastern partner and to treat it like a colonial poor relation. One by one, the imposition of Urdu as the sole official language of Pakistan, the 'One Unit' device, and a discriminatory economic policy that diverted resources to the West proceeded to give a renewed impetus to the call for Bengali autonomy and transform it into a mass movement. By the mid 1960s, with the exception of Islamist parties, political opinion in the East had galvanised behind the demand for a self-governing province. It was the platform on which Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Awami League (hereafter AL) won all but two of the 153 seats allotted to East Pakistan in Pakistan's national assembly in the 1970 elections. And it was the cause that saw East Pakistan emerge as Bangladesh when India decisively intervened on the province's side to defeat Pakistan in 1971 in what turned out to be a war of liberation.

Reminiscent of the way 'Islam' had achieved Pakistan for the Muslim League, Bengali nationalism achieved Bangladesh for the AL. In receiving a nation-state they had not specifically demanded, Bengali Muslims came face to face with a crisis of identity for a second time in 25 years. Separation from a Muslim homeland posed choices that were, if anything, more testing than those of 1947. Was the nation to be defined in terms of Bengali ethnicity and language, or would 'Muslimness' re-emerge in some new Bangladeshi form? Was the state to be secular or Islamic? Initially guided by Mujib – the father of the nation – independent Bangladesh opted after a year's deliberation for a parliamentary type of constitution, in which 'secularism' was enshrined in the preamble and in Article 8 as one of the four pillars of the state.[49] All communities were to be treated equally, and religious parties were banned from

political activity. Although the AL chose to interpret a massive win in the 1973 elections as a referendum on this policy,[50] secularism was neither widely understood nor well promoted. As a 'constitutional' pillar it was chipped away by a 'Muslim Bengal' movement and came crashing to the ground when Mujib was assassinated in 1975 and the army assumed power.

What replaced it were several constitutional amendments, initiated by the incoming military regime of General Zia ur Rahman, that restored Islam as the basis of national ideology. In 1977 'secularism' was discarded as a fundamental principle of state policy and substituted by a new clause that the 'basis of all actions' was 'absolute trust and faith' in Allah. A year later national identity was changed from 'Bengali' to 'Bangladeshi' to redraw the line between Muslims and Hindus, and to rank their religio-political differences higher than their ethno-linguistic similarities. If Bengali nationalism emphasised the secular tradition of the country, Bangladeshi nationalism highlighted its Muslim roots. In a sense this reinstated the 'Two Nation' thesis that the formation of Bangladesh had seemingly overturned. Hindu Bengal was once more recognised as Indian and alien. Juxtapositioning Bangladeshi nationalism against Bengali nationalism, Zia ur Rahman created the Bangladesh National Party (hereafter BNP) to compete for power with the AL as an anti-secular, anti-Indian and pro-Islam political force. The door was thus pushed wide open for religious parties to re-enter politics and for Islam to re-occupy a central space in the discourse on national identity. That door has been ajar ever since, though it was at its widest when General Hossain Muhammad Ershad succeeded to the presidency following the assassination of Zia in 1981.

As in Pakistan, so too in Bangladesh, wooing the Islamic Right as a political ally came at the price of promising to advance the cause of Islamisation, and greater religious influence in the affairs of the state. In 1988 Islam was proclaimed as the state religion through the eighth amendment, though the Ershad regime retained Bangladesh's name as the 'People's Republic' of Bangladesh. By throwing its support behind the BNP in 1991, the *Jamaat-i-Islami* secured a position of influence in the succeeding BNP government and has retained this influence ever since. It immediately launched an offensive against secularism, campaigned vigorously for an Islamic state, demanded blasphemy laws and the execution of atheists and apostates, waged massive street demonstrations, and spearheaded an attack on the feminist writer Taslima Nasreen. The focus of a virulent fundamentalist drive, Nasreen's provocative criticisms of pirs and mullahs as 'worthless and tremendously lustful men', her campaign for the freedom of women, and her concern for minorities allowed the Islamists to portray the proponents of secular nationalism as traitors to the cultural and religious values of the country. Particular exception was taken to her novel *Lajja* and to the strong message it conveyed that Muslim Bangladesh was rapidly alienating its religious minorities and seemed ideologically incapable of accommodating them. Although they generally do not fare well in elections – lacking the vote banks of traditional

landed power – the religious parties are well organised, have armed cadres to intimidate opponents, and operate outside the law with impunity. In rural and remote areas the mullahs have created a 'parallel structure' of Islamic authority by means of *fatwas* (religious edicts), which effectively bypass the judicial system of the state.[51]

While the high court moved to curb fundamentalist encroachment by banning *fatwas* in December 2000, neither the BNP nor the AL – who have alternated in government since 1991 – have shown any inclination to take on the Islamic Right or temper its propensity for violence and persecution. The *Jamaat-i-Islami*, which won 16 seats in the 2001 general elections, remains a coalition partner of the BNP, and the AL has begun to court religious support itself, if less enthusiastically. This is the logical consequence of two essentially secular parties using the idiom of religion not because they fell into line over Islam becoming the defining ideology of Bangladesh, but in order to derive political mileage and achieve power. However, in patronising Islam is Bangladesh any more likely than Pakistan to accommodate the multiple identities in whose defence it was created?

India

Of the three nation-states it was India that always looked the most sure-footed about resolving the related issues of national ideology and multi-culturalism. Certainly there was no confusion and no ambivalence when the Indian National Congress under Jawaharlal Nehru chose a secular destiny for India in 1947, and provided it in 1950 with a secular constitution – much of it, like Pakistan's, based on the 1935 Government of India Act – and a democratic political structure. Ignoring the protestations of Hindu communalist groups, such as the Hindu Mahasabha, the liberal nationalist leadership handed down a constitution that was designed to defuse communalism and deal with minority situations at both the federal and state levels. A number of safeguards for the protection of minorities were put in place. Article 14 enshrined the principle of equality for all citizens regardless of religion, language and caste. Article 16 promised equal opportunity of employment in the public sphere and the possible reservation of positions for under-represented 'backward classes'. Article 30 granted the right to all minorities – religious, linguistic, and cultural – to establish and administer their own educational institutions.[52] As the favoured instrument of national integration, secularism was intended to confront the problem of cultural and religious difference, which Partition had exposed, and to furnish an inclusionary nationalism that would negate Pakistan and all it stood for. However, instead of putting the issue of pluralism to rest, which it had failed to do before Partition, India proceeded to skip over it by failing to define the limits of majoritarianism.

For the millions of Muslims who stayed in India, secularism did not prove inclusionary enough. A crisis of identity faced particularly those who had

supported the idea of Pakistan and the affirmation of cultural and national difference it represented. Because of Partition, fellow Muslims across the border were rendered foreigners and possible enemies, while Hindus, with whom they have had much less affinity, were to be embraced and supported as fellow citizens. In answer to the critical question of whether Muslims could be Indian or think of themselves as Indians, a number of prominent community leaders and university graduates headed for Pakistan. This exodus of leadership not only left the masses of remaining Muslims feeling deserted – and conscious of not being wanted in Pakistan either – it raised doubts about their loyalty to the state and placed a premium on proving their 'Indianness'.[53] While the problems of adjustment were much less severe for Muslim 'nationalists' – who had espoused the cause of a united India – 'Indianness' in secular garb came at a high price.

That price entailed that Muslims distance themselves from the religious symbols that united them and live without the traditional protections that had imparted some degree of cultural security. The principle of communal representation in the legislatures was the first protection to go when separate electorates and reserved seats were scrapped in the constitution. The undertaking in Article 44 for the state to endeavour to provide a uniform civil code suggested that Muslim personal law would eventually have to be surrendered as well. And Urdu, with its Arabic script and Persianised vocabulary, was to be accorded no special recognition. While Article 350A allowed linguistic minorities to be instructed in their mother tongues, Article 351 placed emphasis on Hindi 'as a medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture'. Any insistence that Urdu be recognised as an historic language of India automatically carried the stigma that this was the official language of the enemy, Pakistan. Despite all this, India's Muslims were never able to shake the description of 'communal minority' and continue to be saddled by it. Moves to band together to combat discrimination or to articulate Muslim politics invariably encountered the charge of acting communally. Thus, far from protecting minority rights as Muslims had hoped, the secular state – which they had supported by voting for Congress for 40 years – progressively eroded them. Collectively Muslims remain among the more economically disadvantaged, more professionally under-represented and more politically marginalised of Indians.

Having begun to encounter disenchantment from the minority Muslim community for failing to deliver it equal citizenship, secularism began to come under serious challenge from the majority Hindu community for failing to provide the appropriate ideological basis of the state. Resuscitating the *Hindutva* movement of the 1920s, the BJP, which politically fronted a Hindu nationalist coalition or family – the *sangh parivar*[54] – proposed a communal reconstruction of national ideology. While the BJP did not repudiate secularism outright, it dismissed it as not only alien to India's cultural reality but also patently artificial in the way Congress governments had applied it. Indeed, well before the Hindu Right began to make the running on

Hinduising the political culture of India, Congress leaders from Indira Gandhi to Narashima Rao had not hesitated to drum up religious sentiment to offset electoral reverses and restore their party's political fortunes. Not only was their opposition to communalism 'feeble',[55] they played the communal card so blatantly themselves that Achin Vanaik has characterised their approach as 'pale saffron'.[56]

With the storming of the Babri mosque at Ayodhya by a 'saffron' mob in December 1992, the unresolved problem of accommodating pluralism in the Indian state reappeared with a vengeance. This time the BJP's 'One Nation' solution,[57] based on the majoritarian argument that India should be a Hindu state, conjured up a constitutional future that would get rid of pluralism altogether. Minorities of various kinds might exist but 'minoritarianism' would be eliminated. Making rapid electoral inroads in the early 1990s, this platform propelled the BJP to office in 1998 and 1999 and could help keep it there at the forthcoming 2004 elections. At the moment the BJP holds power as a coalition of political groups, which has been a significant constraining factor in its promotion of *Hindutva* and the Hinduisation of Indian political and social life. But were the BJP to win government in its own right a more emboldened nationalist movement might conceivably emerge to challenge India's secular status and democratic character even further. Certainly the BJP has foreshadowed amendments to the constitution, and L.K. Advani – one of the more aggressive drivers of the Hindu nationalist agenda – is set to replace Lal Behari Vajpayee as its leader.

Although the BJP suffered a number of electoral setbacks in recent state elections, the successful anti-Muslim campaign run in Gujarat in December 2002 by its provincial chief minister Narendra Modi – a hardline Hindu nationalist preacher turned politician – has ominous implications. In an election that could be seen as a referendum on India's secular character, Modi's landslide victory suggests that a blatant communal political strategy – which targeted Muslims as terrorists – can be very effective. Within the context of the international situation especially, the BJP slogan – 'Hinduism in danger' – has the potential of striking a popular chord. Yet if anything is in danger in India it is not Hinduism, but non-Hindus. Muslims have come under attack as never before and apart from converting to Hinduism, which some have opted to do,[58] they have yet to find a secure and effective way to articulate a distinctive Muslim voice in either a secular or Hindu state. In effect the issue of Muslim identity is back to where it started in 1947.

What underpins these inter-connected histories of ideological tension, and at times crisis? Are irreconcilable differences concerning religious culture at the heart of the story? Or are more temporal considerations involved? Depending on how far back in time the search for answers begins, a number of analytical approaches to unlock the key of religious nationalism have been suggested.

The current models of explanation applied to the Muslim League's demand for Pakistan explore a number of causative possibilities that might usefully be

extended to the Indian and Bangladeshi situations as well. The most common, though the least satisfactory, revolves round the objectives and strategy of elite leaderships, notably those of Jinnah as the *Quaid-i-Azam* (the 'great leader') and 'sole spokesman' of Pakistan. However, the tendency to unfold religious nationalism as the product of single-minded gamesmanship – which in Jinnah's case has variously been likened to the play of 'bridge', 'chess', 'poker' and even 'boxing' – does not go very far and is not persuasive when applied to Musharraf, Vajpayee, or Bangladesh's dynastic rivals, Sheikh Hasina Wajid and Begum Khaleda Zia, the widows of Bangladesh's martyred founding fathers, Mujibur Rahman and Zia ur Rahman.

Paul Brass's 'primordial–instrumental' model of analysis for exploring the mainsprings of Muslim separatism goes a lot further. This tests whether the patterns of identity that are launched by communities seeking to create new, or re-fashion existing, states were primordially derived from history, or instrumentally constructed by elites to win or maintain power. While scholarly opinion parts company over which set of impulses better accounted for Muslim nationalism, the model is a very useful one for measuring the pull of traditional religious ideology against the push of politically induced change;[59] in the BJP's promotion of *Hindutva*, no less than the Muslim League's or the BNP's recruitment of Islam.

While the contexts that saw Muslim nationalism and Hindu nationalism take off in the 1940s and 1990s respectively are very different, on balance instrumentalism holds scholarly sway as an explanation and most of the evidence points in this direction. There is little dispute that the Muslim League proclaimed 'Islam in danger' before Partition and 'Pakistan in danger' after Partition for purposes of mobilisation, though in doing so, it never managed to build a Pakistan-wide constituency. To seek legitimacy and to stay in power successive regimes have readily followed suit. As Asim Roy poignantly observes: 'The story of Pakistan's politics since its inception is one of a blatant pursuit of self interests by Pakistan's ruling elites disguised in terms of religious discourse.'[60] In India similar critical commentary abounds on the BJP's construction of an idealised Hindu past,[61] and its invocation of 'Hinduism in danger' whenever there is an election or some challenge to its popularity. In a country where 85 per cent of the population are Hindu, playing the 'Hindu' card has become a commonplace of Indian politics. Indira Gandhi was simply a more subtle exponent of the game than L.K. Advani, whose advance in a motorised golden chariot on the Babri mosque in 1991 ahead of a fanatical mob of saffron-clad Hindus established a benchmark for showmanship.

A variation of the instrumentalist model that also has definite Indian and Bangladeshi possibilities is Hamza Alavi's investigation of the composition and mentality of the core support driving the religious nationalist agenda of Pakistan. His concept of the 'salariats' draws attention to the role of the middle classes and professional elites who jumped on the bandwagon of the Pakistan movement for reasons that had little to do with the preservation of Muslim culture, and who jumped off it once Pakistan was achieved.[62]

Whether a similar 'salariat' element can be found among the BJP's or BNP's central following awaits confirmation, though it seems likely that the *Hindutva* movement includes elements who seek to benefit from its political ascendancy but who do not necessarily subscribe to its cultural project.[63] A significant proportion of urban middle-class and non-resident Indians who embrace Hindu nationalism may fall into this category.

Primordial explanations command less support, though they are beginning to be taken more seriously. As Brass, a convinced instrumentalist, concedes, even while manipulating cultural symbols for the purpose of mobilisation, elites remain constrained by 'the cultures of the groups they hope to represent'.[64] The symbols of identity they may choose to highlight are logically those best calculated to engender a mass response. In short, there is a critical subaltern or popular dimension to the process of ideological construction. What proved decisive in the movement for Pakistan, for instance, was not the commitment of its leaders to an Islamic destiny, but the receptiveness of the Muslim masses to a call to rally in defence of their religion. The Muslim League simply tapped into an already existing and substantial reservoir of Islamic sentiment. Likewise in India, the BJP's championing of Hindustan and its tracing of Hindu political practice to values and beliefs rooted in the past has appealed to large numbers of Indians. As Peter van der Veer puts it: 'India's most important imaginings of nation continue to be religious not secular'.[65] In the end probably what counts are the actual contexts in which national identities undergo change, and the real, as distinct from the imagined, circumstances that peoples confront.

This is where the current international situation fits into the picture. The phenomenon of Islamic terrorism and the 'fight' against it form a poignant backdrop to the sharpening of national identities and the continuing generation of nationalist sentiment in South Asia, which is at the cutting edge of these developments. That Pakistan, India and Bangladesh have all reached a crossroads in their negotiating of national ideology stems not only from Muslim–Hindu dichotomy, which has been a constant factor since 1947, but also from the presence of external and internal threat, which is of more recent origin. The BJP's world-view, for instance, while drawing sustenance from V.D. Savarkar's enduring notion of 'threatening Others',[66] has acquired tangible substance through the opening up of a militant Islamic front in Kashmir and its underwriting by Pakistan's notorious Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency. This insurgency has cost over 30,000 lives since 1989.[67] On this evidence it is understandable that Pakistan has come to feature as the major 'external threat' in Hindu nationalist rhetoric. Before 11 September the US State Department readily identified Pakistan as the largest exporter and entrepôt of Islamic mercenaries, and had its assistance in Afghanistan not been so pivotal to US strategy, Pakistan might have been included in George W. Bush's axis of evil. In order to conciliate the US Musharraf took steps in mid 2002 to slow the infiltration of Islamic fighters to Indian Kashmir, but is engendering a significant Islamist backlash in return. Lampooned as

'Busharraf' in the streets of Pakistan,[68] he has himself become a prime target of assassination by Islamic militants.[69] Since 11 September, Bangladesh is also reported to have become a staging-off post for terrorists through Chittagong. With respect to any 'internal threat' there has been much less evidence of India's Muslims taking their inspiration or their orders from global terrorism. Nonetheless they have been put on notice by the fundamentalist Shiv Sena in Maharashtra that should Islamic terrorism materialise it would be met by Hindu terrorism, though on an infinitely larger scale.[70]

In Pakistan's and Bangladesh's constructions of the international enemy, India naturally features on the grounds of its relative size, proximity and military capacity. That it prevailed against Pakistan on every occasion they have come to blows has established a psychological edge that cannot be underestimated. Bangladesh too has still to reconcile the dominant role India played in its achievement of independence in 1971. But in all probability the greater 'threat' their respective governments face comes from Islamist forces gathering within their borders rather than from Hindus massed outside them. While a 'theocracy' in either Pakistan or Bangladesh seems a far way off, the creation of popular constituencies in support of this objective remains the logical and inherent potential. In Pakistan's October 2002 general elections a fundamentalist coalition – the *Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal* – won 50 seats in the 272-seat parliament, a record for religious parties, and has gone on to form the regional government in the pro-Taliban North West Frontier Province. Only time will tell whether this is a reflection of rampant anti-American or burgeoning pro-Islamic sentiment.

Clearly the creation of three separate nation-states has so far failed to provide the bridge between national ideology and the multiple cultural beliefs and practices that are embedded in their respective societies. The cohesiveness that Pakistan looked to Islam to deliver has not been forthcoming, Bangladesh has yet to blend the Bengali and Bangladeshi strands of its nationalism, and secularism has delivered India a majoritarian rather than a multi-cultural political system. With secularism seriously under threat in India, in the balance in Bangladesh, and openly derided in Pakistan, the prospect of all three states in South Asia ultimately defining themselves by single, exclusivist, religious ideologies looms closer.

South Asia's minorities look to be in for a long and difficult haul. Since the October 2001 elections, Bangladeshi Hindus have been subjected to Islamist Muslim persecution and have begun to seek refuge in West Bengal in significant numbers.[71] In India Muslims have no extra-territorial haven to run to, though there has been some migration to the cities for mutual protection.[72] While there is still no indication of an all-India Muslim political movement developing, there are signs that Muslims are looking for solidarity beyond a weakening Congress to other marginalised groups. In 1993, for instance, they successfully joined with the *dalits* or lower castes to defeat the BJP in the state election of Uttar Pradesh. As one commentator recently put it, India's Muslims are fast becoming the 'new untouchables'.[73]

To sum up, it would seem that the promotion of religious nationalisms in South Asia has had more to do with the politicisation of religion than with any irreconcilable civilisational differences. The danger, however, is that once an ideology is up and running it acquires a certain life and momentum of its own and is not easily controlled even by those who promote it. This happened in the Muslim League's mobilisation of Islam and it looks also to be happening in the BJP's articulation of *Hindutva*. In effect the political elites of both countries have been 'riding the tiger' of communalism. Having come to power on its back they have found it no easy matter to either rein it in or dismount from it. Yet neither Pakistani Islam nor Indian Hinduness appear close to supplying more consensual or solid bases of state identity than the existing edifices they seek to replace. As has been shown, a shared Islam in Pakistan has not managed to keep its Muslim community united and has proved more exclusionary than composite. Likewise an all-Indian nationalism based on Hindu identity looks set to alienate its very sizeable minority of non-Hindus. Until these developments run their full course South Asia will remain one of the world's most volatile, confused and confrontational regions.

Notes

1 *New York Times*, 30 May 2002.
2 *New York Times*, 14 May 2002.
3 The call came from India's foreign minister, Yushwant Sinha, following the US-led campaign in Iraq.
4 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 March 2002.
5 While L.K. Advani espied the hand of Pakistan, the investigating police immediately contradicted him. *New York Times*, 15 September 2003.
6 *New York Times*, 26 August 2003.
7 Brasted and Khan (2002), pp. 374–7. See also Bailey (2002), pp. 165–86; and Pandey (1994), pp. 106–12.
8 Huntington (1996), pp. 28, 47.
9 Cinic, Japanese, Hindu, Islamic, Orthodox, Western, Latin American, and possibly African.
10 See Jinnah's address in Philips (1964), p. 353.
11 Huntington (1996), p. 258n.
12 For detailed analyses of the phenomenon of Hindu nationalism see Hansen (1999); Jaffrelot (1999); van der Veer (1994); Vanaik (1997); and Zavos (2000).
13 Huntington (1996), p. 207.
14 See Article 351.
15 Jalal (1995), p. 215.
16 Roy and Brasted (1999), pp. 1–12.
17 The picture becomes even more diverse if regional and linguistic variations are taken into account.
18 See Jalal (1995), p. 233.
19 This section draws largely on Brasted and Khan (2002).
20 Zakaria (1988), pp. 228–40.
21 Jinnah in Philips (1964), p. 353.
22 Jinnah (1991), pp. 27–8.
23 Jalal (1991), p. 17.
24 Noman (1988), pp. 6–8.

25 Jalal (1991), p. 285; and Syed (1984), p. 80.
26 Qadiani Ahmadis accord their founder Mirza Ghulam Ahmad the status of a prophet, thus denying the fundamental Muslim doctrine that Muhammad is the last of the prophets.
27 Extracts from the Munir Report in Roy (1996), pp. 164–5.
28 For a detailed account of the constituent assembly deliberations see Binder (1963), p. 137ff.
29 The second constitution too was brought to a sudden end in 1969 when General Yahya Khan replaced Ayub Khan.
30 Yasmeen (1999), pp. 183–96.
31 Benazir Bhutto quoted in Zakaria (1988), p. 238.
32 Benazir Bhutto enjoyed a slightly longer second term in 1993–6.
33 Jalal (1995), pp. 108–12.
34 Brasted and Khan (2002), pp. 366–72.
35 Stern (2001), p. 138
36 Ibid.
37 See Islam (1981), pp. 56–8.
38 Noman (1988), p. 10.
39 Sayeed (1987), pp. 170–1.
40 Excerpts published in *Herald* (Karachi), November 1999.
41 *New York Times*, 22 August 2002.
42 *Sipah-e-Sahaba* and *Tehrik-e-Jafria*, and earlier *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi* and *Sipah-e-Mohammad*.
43 *Herald* (Karachi), February 2002.
44 *New York Times*, 11 June 2003.
45 See Khan (2001).
46 Jalal (1995), p. 239.
47 Boreham (1998). See also Sayed (1995), p. 122.
48 Jalal (1985), pp. 265–6.
49 Democracy, nationalism and socialism were the other three.
50 The AL secured over 73 per cent of the vote and 292 of the 300 seats contested.
51 For an excellent account of the tensions between the forces of secular liberalism and religious extremism in Bangladesh, see Murshid (1998), pp. 152–72.
52 Shahabuddin and Wright (1987), pp. 152–8.
53 Roy (1996), pp. 168–70.
54 Other members of this nationalist family include the *Rashtriya Svayamsevak Sangh* (RSS) and the *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* (VHP).
55 For an account of Congress-style communalism see Hasan (1997), pp. 261–9.
56 Vanaik (1997), p. 302. Saffron is the colour of political *Hindutva*.
57 'One Nation, One People and One Culture' had been the BJP's election manifesto in 1998.
58 Sikand and Katju (1994).
59 See Brass (1974). Brass defends this thesis against Francis Robinson in particular in: 'A Reply to Francis Robinson', (1977), pp. 231–4; and 'Elite Groups, Symbol Manipulation and Ethnic Identity among the Muslims of South Asia', (1979), pp. 35–77. Robinson (1977), pp. 215–30; and Robinson (1979), pp. 78–112. Shaikh (1989), pp. 1–9. See Jalal (1997), pp. 90, 94.
60 Roy (1996), p. 150.
61 See Thapar (1991), pp. 17–33; and Thapar (1989), pp. 209–31. See also Pandey (1994), pp. 106–12; and Bailey (2002), pp. 165–86.
62 Alavi (1988), pp. 67–70.
63 See Marsh and Brasted, (2002), pp. 235–51.
64 Brass (1979), p. 67.
65 van der Veer (1994), p. 22. See also Madan (1987), pp. 747–59; and Nandy (1990), pp. 69–93.
66 Jaffrelot (1999), p. 25.
67 *New York Times*, 15 May 2002.
68 *New York Times*, 5 July 2002.

69 Musharraf survived two attempts on his life in December 2003.
70 *New York Times*, 15 September 2003.
71 Wright (2002), pp. 386–7.
72 *New York Times*, 1 September 2003.
73 *New York Times*, 16 December 2002.

References

Alavi, H. (1988) 'Pakistan and Islam: Ethnicity and Ideology', in Halliday, F. and Alavi, H. (eds), *State and Ideology in the Middle East and Pakistan*, London: Macmillan Education.

Bailey, G. (2002) 'The Work of Indo-American Historians and the Rewriting of Indian History', *South Asia*, Special Issue, the BJP and Governance in India, vol. 25, no. 3, pp. 165–86.

Binder, L. (1963) *Religion and Politics in Pakistan*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Boreham, N. (1998) 'Communal Politics, Sindhi Separatism, and the Creation of Pakistan', unpublished PhD thesis: University of New England.

Brass, P. (1979) 'Elite Groups, Symbol Manipulation and Ethnic Identity among the Muslims of South Asia', in Taylor, D. and Yapp, M. (eds) *Political Identity in South Asia*, London: Curzon, pp. 35–77.

—— (1977) 'A Reply to Francis Robinson', *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, vol. 15, no. 3, pp. 231–4.

—— (1974) *Language, Religion and Politics in North India*, London: Cambridge University Press.

Brasted, H. and Khan, A. (2002) 'Pakistan, the BJP, and the Politics of Identity', *South Asia*, Special Issue, the BJP and Governance in India, vol. 25, no. 3, pp. 374–7.

Hansen, T. (1999) *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*, Princeton: Princeton University Press,.

Hasan, M. (1997) *Legacy of a Divided Nation. India's Muslims since Independence*, London: Hurst.

Huntington, S. (1996) *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York: Simon & Schuster.

Islam, N. (1981) 'Islam and National Identity: The Case of Pakistan and Bangladesh', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 13, pp. 56–8.

Jaffrelot, C. (1999) *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics*, New York: Penguin.

Jalal, A. (1997) 'Exploding Communalism: The Politics of Muslim Identity in South Asia,' in Bose, S. and Jalal, A. (eds) *Nationalism, Democracy and Development. State and Politics in India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press.

—— (1995) *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia. A Comparative and Historical Perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

—— (1991) *The State of Martial Law: The Origins of Pakistan's Political Economy of Defence*, Lahore: Vanguard Books.

—— (1985) *The Sole Spokesman. Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jinnah, M. (1991) *Quaid-i-Azam Speaks: His Vision of Pakistan*, Karachi: Quaid-i-Azam Academy.

Khan, A. (2001) 'Ethnic Nationalism and the State in Pakistan', unpublished PhD thesis: University of Wollongong.

Madan, T. (1987) 'Secularism in its Place', *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 46, no. 4, pp. 747–59.

Marsh, J. and Brasted, H. (2002) 'Fire, the BJP and Moral Society', *South Asia*, Special Issue, the BJP and Governance in India, vol. 25, no. 3, pp. 235–51.

Murshid, T. (1998) 'The Sacred and the Secular: A Crisis of Governance in Bangladesh', in Mitra, S. and Rothermund, D. (eds), *Legitimacy and Conflict in South Asia*, Delhi: Manohar.

Nandy, A. (1990) 'The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance', in Das, V. (ed.), *Mirrors of Violence: Communities, Riots and Survivors in South Asia*, Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Noman, O. (1988) *The Political Economy of Pakistan 1947–85*, London: Keegan Paul.

Pandey, G. (1994) 'The New Hindu History', *South Asia*, Special Issue, vol. 17, pp. 106–12.

Philips, C. (ed.) (1964) *The Evolution of India and Pakistan 1858–1947*, London: Oxford University Press.

Robinson, F. (1979) 'Islam and Muslim Separatism', in Taylor, D. and Yapp, M. (eds.), *Political Identity in South Asia*, London: Curzon, pp. 78–112.

—— (1977) 'Nation Formation: The Brass Thesis and Muslim Separatism', *JCCP*, vol. 15, no. 3, pp. 215–30.

Roy, A. (1996) *Islam in South Asia. A Regional Perspective*, New Delhi: South Asia Publishers.

Roy, A. and Brasted, H. (1999) 'Islam in History and Politics: A South Asian Perspective', *South Asia*, Special Issue, Islam in History and Politics, vol. 22, pp. 1–12.

Sayed, G. (1995) *The Case of Sindh: G.M. Sayed's Deposition for the Court*, Karachi: Naeen Sindh Academy.

Sayeed, K. (1987) *The Political System of Pakistan*, Karachi: Civil and Military Press.

Shahabuddin, S. and Wright, T. (1987) 'India: Muslim Minority Politics and Society', in Esposito, J. (ed.) *Islam in Asia. Religion, Politics, and Society*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Shaikh, F. (1989) *Community and Consensus in Islam. Muslim Representation in Colonial India, 1860–1947,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1–9.

Sikand, Y. and Katju, M. (1994) 'Mass Conversions among Indian Muslims,' *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 29, no. 34.

Stern, B. (2001) *Democracy and Dictatorship in South Asia. Dominant Classes and political Outcomes in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh*, Westport: Praeger.

Syed, A. (1984) *Pakistan, Islam, Politics and National Solidarity*, Lahore: Vanguard.

Thapar, R. (1991) 'Communalism and the Historical Legacy: Some Facets', in Panikkar, K. (ed.) *Communalism in India: History, Politics and Culture*, Delhi: Manohar.

—— (1989) 'Imagined Religious communities? Ancient History and the Modern Search for a Hindu Identity', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 23, no. 2, pp. 209–31.

Vanaik, A. (1997) *The Furies of Hindu Communalism: Religion, Modernity and Secularization*, London: Verso.

van der Veer, P. (1994) *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Wright, D. (2002) 'Bangladesh and the BJP,' *South Asia*, vol. 25, pp. 386–7.

Yasmeen, S. (1999) 'Islamisation and Democratisation in Pakistan: Implications for Women and Religious Minorities', *South Asia*, special issue, vol. 22, pp. 183–96.

Zakaria, R. (1988) *The Struggle Within Islam. The Conflict Between Religion and Politics*, London: Penguin.

Zavos, J. (2000) *The Emergence of Hindu Nationalism in India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

7   Islam and ideology in Central Asia

John R. Pottenger

Soviet ideology had envisioned that the Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan would ultimately become more economically developed and integrated into a larger arrangement. Furthermore, the ideology maintained that the proper understanding of social relations consonant with Marxist and a-religious principles would eventually replace the social role of religion in these societies. With the unexpected dissolution of the USSR and the Soviet project far from complete, the Central Asian republics turned to the only realistic alternative to Soviet atheist ideology: Islam.

Today, Islamic values and expectations have a strong influence on politics in the five contiguous Central Asian republics. In turn, the politics of the region is influenced by international Islamic movements and other geopolitical forces. However, unlike many regions of the world and thus unique to Central Asia, the revival of Islamic teachings and practices has emerged from the shadows of seven decades of Soviet ideology and practices. As a result, one observes two different ways in which Islam is made to play a role in the politics of Central Asia: an Islam in tune with the interests of those in state power and another in tune with the political aspirations of the Islamist parties opposing the state.

In this chapter, I argue that the Soviet experiment and its legacy are embedded in the Central Asian republics' new nationalism and their response to resurgent Islam. I examine the way in which religious Islamic teachings were managed and policed during the Soviet era and the remnants of this legacy on the now independent Central Asian republics, focusing in particular on the Uzbekistan experience. I also argue that this current policy by the Central Asian governments of suppressing religious aspirations is acting as a catalyst for the radicalisation of Islamic movements in Central Asia.

Islamic presence in Central Asia

An Islamic revival has been underway during the past decade, as the Muslims of Central Asia rediscover their heritage and renew their faith.[1] Today, Islamic beliefs and practices are ubiquitous and pervade nearly all aspects of social

relations, from salutations (Ассалому Алейкум) to prayers (Аллоху Акбар) in various settings. Many mosques and madrassahs constructed during the medieval era are being restored and new ones built at an unprecedented rate.

Near the city of Bukhara, Uzbekistan, stands the mosque and *madrasah* built in memory of Muhammad Bakhouddin Naqshbandi, a fourteenth-century Muslim scholar and one of the founders of the Sufi *naqshbandiyya tarikat*, considered the most revered mystic and saint in Central Asia. The mosque contains holy relics, including the tomb of Bakhouddin Naqshbandi. Throughout the day, devout Muslim pilgrims arrive from various cities, as well as nearby Bukhara, itself regarded as the holiest Islamic city in Central Asia, to pay homage to Naqshbandi. They walk three times around the stone tomb in the belief that such ritual acts will heal bodily infirmities. Many travellers also stoop to pass beneath a thick and heavy branch of an ancient tree on the site, believing that if done three times, their back pains will disappear; others leave messages scribbled on scraps of paper or pieces of cloth tucked tightly between crevices of the tree, imploring assistance from Allah.

Sojourners too arrive at the Naqshbandi mosque to perform sacrifices of lambs, as thanks to Allah for blessings received by their families. In fact, Muslim Tajiks and Uzbeks in the region maintain that walking from the regional capital city of Bukhara to the Naqshbandi mosque and back ten times in one's life is the equivalent of the obligatory Hajj to Mecca, thus permitting believers to fulfil one of the five pillars of Islam.

In addition to the development of personal spirituality, Islam encourages believers to develop a sense of social concern for the less fortunate and justice for society. While Sufi mystics generally avoid involvement in politics, the followers of *Naqshbandi tarikat* historically have advocated political responsibility, and in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they actively resisted both tzarist and Soviet domination.

Soviet experiment and legacy

During the Soviet era, certain heavy industries were placed in Central Asia to incorporate the natural resources of Russia's border regions into the Soviet Union's developing and industrialising economy. Collective farms were also created for increased cotton production to develop the nascent textile industry. Nevertheless, during the ensuing seven decades, Soviet leaders, both union-wide and in Central Asia, would develop an uneasy relationship between the growth of state bureaucracies and their social and economic policies and the infrequent if tepid tolerance of religious expression, as the Soviet Union sought a solution to the dilemma of freedom and necessity.

From a neutral point of view, the history of the Soviet Union may be seen as a modern social experiment to resolve the persistent problem of conflict that has plagued liberal-democracies. It attempted to overcome the ultimate incompatibility of the Cartesian dualism between private interest and public good by arguing for the preferable and possible identification of the one with

the other. That is, the timeless and universal quest for a just society free from the turmoil of competing interests would be achieved if the objectives of private interests and the common good were identical.

Declaring to have discovered the natural laws of social development and thus the ability to explain and solve this riddle of identification, the Soviet Union promulgated its Marxist-Leninist ideology that claimed the ability to eradicate social conflict and achieve social justice. This ideology served as the guiding ethos of political, economic, and social arrangements throughout society. With an ideological alternative to Western theories of liberal-democracy that historically had given legitimacy to unbridled and short-sighted competition, the ultimate justification of the policies of the Soviet state was used to politicise and subsume economic activity within it in an effort to achieve social justice.

One consequence of the Soviet attempt to overcome the public–private dichotomy was to render irrelevant the *raison d'être* of civil society: the maintenance of a tension between the contrary and competing values of private interest and public good.[2] Since the claims of private interest and public good were theoretically synonymous under the Soviet model, the tension between the two theoretically dissolved. Without any tension to be maintained through the nurturing of formerly competing sets of values, the need for voluntary associations also disappeared. Guided by this model, the practical development of a vibrant civil society in the Soviet Union withered nearly to extinction as the state early on extended its political reach into virtually all aspects of social and economic life, including those of the cultural, ethnic, and religious subgroups of Central Asia.[3]

For seven decades, nonetheless, the Soviet Union was guided by sophisticated theories that meshed poorly with practical problems. But as the fervour of theoretical righteousness slowly dampened with time, the search for practical solutions to practical problems crept to the fore. Ironically, the last 50 years of Soviet history witnessed the political authorities gradually weaning themselves away from total state control of social decision-making toward greater reliance on independent civil society of voluntary associations throughout its republics. Indeed, the greater flow of ideas from and communication with the West as well as an ever more inefficient economy operating alongside an expansion in social welfare programmes made it increasingly difficult for the Soviet Union to govern along narrow ideological lines. In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev, General Secretary of the Communist Party (1985–91), advocated new policies of glasnost (openness to expanded press freedom and artistic expression, and, later, religious freedom) and perestroika (restructuring of economic decision–making and infrastructure).[4] This greater reliance on a capable citizenry, as in the West, was seen by the Soviet leadership as a practical step toward maintaining power while resolving its economic and budgetary crises.[5]

Yet just as the door began to open for the re-emergence of civil society, including significant relaxation of restrictions on religious activities begun in the 1980s,[6] the Soviet empire imploded; its attempt to institutionalise its

ideal of justice faltered and collapsed after seven decades. Shortly before and immediately following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the five Central Asian Soviet socialist republics proclaimed and gained their independence. Facing enormous economic and social problems, they began their independence with only their Soviet-era authoritarian bureaucratic structures left intact. Conflict and uncertainty have arisen, as well, over the place and role of Islam. Key to understanding Islam and politics in Central Asia today is recognition of two apparently contradictory and incompatible yet simultaneously held and interrelated theoretical claims, or antinomies, in previous Soviet practices.

The antinomies

The first antinomy: in the process of constructing artificial political territories and institutions to undermine the threat from bourgeois nationalist tendencies, the Soviet Union laid the foundation for nationalism to prevail in the post-Soviet era. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Russian empire steadily expanded its reach through the steppes of Central Asia bounded by China, India, and Persia. By the end of the nineteenth century, the empire secured its suzerainty over the nomadic tribes of Central Asia, the emirate of Bukhara, and the khanates of Tashkent, Samarqand, Khiva, and Kokand.[7] With domination over the largely Muslim population centres along the Great Silk Road nearly complete, Tzar Nicholas II (1868–1918) may have been considering embarking upon further expeditions of conquest into British-controlled India. However, complications of European politics and war, including the bourgeois–democratic Russian revolution of February 1917 and the Bolsheviks' seizure of power in October that same year, arrested any potential expansion of the Russian empire. With their seizure of state power, the Bolsheviks inherited most of the territories under the previous tzarist government's rule, including the Central Asian region known as Russian Turkestan.

Realising the imminence and immensity of their territorial acquisitions with their diverse nationalities, the Bolsheviks descended into discord regarding problems of disparity between theory and practice. Advocates of strict adherence to Communist tenets eschewed acceptance of the legitimacy of nationalism, arguing that nationalist aspirations enabled capitalist imperialism with its system of exploitation and oppression of the labouring masses by the elite. Yet since industrialisation had hardly touched Turkestan and its Muslim populations, Marxist-Leninist ideology with its focus on the plight of the proletariat seemed hardly appropriate to rally local supporters to defend and promote the socialist objectives of the Soviet Union. Pragmatists, on the other hand, proposed utilisation of ethnic nationalism as an indirect approach to garner support for socialist policies.

In April 1917, Stalin weighed in on the 'national question'. Siding with the pragmatists, he argued that those regions with non-Russian populations,

customs, and languages, including Turkestan, should be given regional autonomy.[8] Indeed, a year later the new Bolshevik government proclaimed the existence of the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Republic. This apparent nod toward nationalism over ideology was seen by Stalin and his supporters as a technique to resist the bourgeois forces with their own appeal to nationalism; those forces had been engaged in earlier efforts to rid Central Asia of Russian colonialism and were now actively resisting the presence of the new Soviet regime.

Pursuing this path of national recognition, on 31 December 1922 the first Congress of Soviets ratified the Declaration and Treaty of Union that created the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which was composed of the following national republics: the Russian Soviet Federation of Socialist Republics, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, and the Transcaucasian Soviet Federation of Socialist Republics. Later, discussion proceeded on the best approach for the eventual incorporation of the other national groupings. Yet among the Muslim population of Turkestan, popular appeal of anti-Soviet movements grew, principally led by the Basmachi Rebellion (primarily 1918–24), consisting of Islamic traditionalists, progressive nationalist intelligentsia, and bandits. The Basmachi rebels fought a guerrilla war against the Red Army, leading uprisings in the Ferghana and Pamir regions of Central Asia, thus forcing the Soviet government again to address the national question more directly. The government used a combination of military force and conciliation to defeat the Basmachi, especially acceding to ethnic demands, including the reversal of anti-Islamic policies instigated during the Civil War (1918–22).

Following the military defeat of the Basmachi, the short-lived Turkestan ASR (1917–24) was eventually dismembered into five national republics and admitted as constituent republics of the USSR: the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic (1924), the Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic (1927), the Tadzhik Soviet Socialist Republic (1929), the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic (1936), and the Kirgiz Soviet Socialist Republic (1936).[9] Furthermore, Stalin advocated local control of government and party by the indigenous peoples, noting that 'Kirghiz, Uzbek, Bashkir and other languages are an actual reality'.[10] He argued that the personnel selected and appointed to government institutions and the Communist Party should be recruited from 'the local people acquainted with the manner of life, habits, customs and language of the native population'.

While these republics were ostensibly created on the basis of a conjectured national identity, in fact allusions to recognition of nationality were primarily used by the Soviet central government to undercut bourgeois nationalist tendencies;[11] indeed, the major Muslim population centre of Central Asia, the Ferghana Valley, was divided among the Kirgiz SSR, Tadzhik SSR, and Uzbek SSR. Furthermore, the territorial boundaries of the republics did not strictly adhere to the location of the diverse national populations. For example, the two largest cities of Tajik residents, Bukhara and Samarqand, were

assigned to the Uzbek SSR, not the Tadzhik SSR. Consequently, nearly all of the republics contained substantial numbers of diverse ethnic, cultural, and linguistic groups whose internecine disputes could be manipulated to serve as obstacles to control by any single group, thus undermining nationalist tendencies. Eventually, according to Soviet ideology, nationalism would be replaced with internationalism and the USSR itself would become part of a World Soviet Socialist Republic.[12] As a consequence of this strategy, when the USSR was dissolved in 1991, the newly independent republics and sovereign nation-states were left lacking a coherent public philosophy to develop a new sense of national identity.

The second antinomy is an extension of the first: with the demise of the Soviet Union's foundational, atheistic ideology that had attempted to control and redefine Islamic social teachings in terms of socialist objectives that would ultimately undermine the appeal of religion, traditional and fundamentalist religious beliefs have surged forth to fill the void left by the discrediting of Soviet ideology. The unintended consequences of perestroika resulted in the dismemberment of the Soviet Union into 15 national republics; similarly, glasnost opened the door to consideration of alternative ideologies and renewed expressions of spirituality. The reinstatement of the legitimacy of religious faith resulted primarily in the reinvigoration of those traditions of the past. In Central Asia, the Muslim faith had not been completely eradicated and thus garnered attention as the basis for religious life as well as the foundation for a new nationalism. Ironically, Soviet attitudes and policies toward religion had engendered certain sympathy for the value of things spiritual.

Prior to 1991, the Soviet government's attitude toward religion was arbitrary and changeable. In November 1917, the Soviet government declared and respected freedom of religious belief and expression of all Muslims.[13] However, while incorporating representatives of local nationalities to strengthen implementation of and compliance with Soviet policies, Stalin also noted that organisers of the local Communist parties in Turkestan tended to base their social assessments and arguments less on class analysis and more on an appeal to nationalism under the label of Pan-Islamism.[14] A secular movement, Pan-Islamism attempted to link Muslim modernists, who promoted political freedom as a means to create ethnic units with access to natural resources, with Muslim traditionalists, who advocated unification of the *umma* to create a regional theocracy or caliphate.[15] However, the Bolsheviks perceived Pan-Islamism as simply a tool by the ruling classes in Muslim societies to stifle the socialist revolution; they also regarded religion as merely a salve for the pain and suffering of the exploited masses.

At the end of the 1920s, the Soviet government initiated a new, wide-ranging campaign against religion. This campaign included the closing of Muslim courts, *madrasas*, and mosques, and the prohibition of Islamic publications, as well as of the use of Arabic script. To discredit religion, Stalin called upon the Communist Party to form Marxist study groups at the local level, to publish Marxist literature in the native languages, and to form a

University of the Peoples of the East for disseminating Marxist principles to a wider audience.[16] In pursuing these activities, Stalin believed that local nationalist aspirations would be converted to internationalism and religious adherence to atheism, as the peasantry began to see their former position of oppression in the worldwide system of capitalism and imperialism and the cynical use of religion by that system.

The anti-religious campaign in Central Asia, however, failed to lead to the 'mass atheisation' that occurred when the Soviet government closed Christian churches in Soviet Europe.[17] During and following the Second World War, the Soviet government lifted slightly its restrictions on Muslim practices in Central Asia. To regulate Muslim affairs, four Muslim Spiritual Directorates were created to control and regulate religious practices. The most significant Directorate was located in Tashkent, Uzbek SSR, and, until 1989, the only two *madrasas* approved to reopen were located in Bukhara and Tashkent. In addition, a small number of mosques were permitted to reopen; the publication of certain religious literature was approved, including an Uzbek translation of the Qur'an; and a select few believers were permitted annually to make the Hajj to Mecca. Furthermore, the earliest extant manuscript of the Qur'an, known as the Mushaf of Othman, was returned to Tashkent from St Petersburg, where it had been taken by the tzarist government 70 years earlier. Considered one of the holiest treasures of Islam and superseding all other versions of the Qur'an, Central Asian Muslims believe the Othman text to be a seventh-century manuscript, a copy of the recension of the Qur'an compiled under the rule of Othman (644–56), within 25 years of the Prophet's death.[18]

In order to advance Soviet domestic and international objectives, then, these efforts that alternately attempted to eradicate then placate religious sensitivities were similar to those that alternately attempted to undermine then reconcile nationalist tendencies. Perhaps, given enough time, such utilitarian methods would have been successful in resolving the antinomies of Soviet theory and practice. The unexpected demise of the Soviet Union, however, truncated its social experiment, thus leaving its hypotheses untested. More important, though, its experimental designs were left intact, thus permitting advocates of religion and nationalism to find common ground in their defence of the new republics of Central Asia.

The new republics of Central Asia

With the unanticipated and unwanted dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Central Asian republics gained their independence: Uzbekistan (September 1991), Kyrgyzstan (September 1991), Tajikistan (September 1991), Turkmenistan (October 1991), and Kazakhstan (December 1991). Since independence, the republics have been forced to confront the daunting challenge of retaining their new nation-state status and building a new sense of national identity. Nevertheless, although the Soviet Union disappeared, the Soviet system remained. The former Communist leaders, who are now

national presidents of the Central Asian republics, have retained and enhanced their political position, despite nominal attempts at democratic and competitive elections. They are: Askar Akaev (president of Kyrgyzstan since 1991), Islam Karimov (president of Uzbekistan since 1991), Nursultan Nazarbayev (president of Kazakhstan since 1991), Saparmurat Niyazov (president of Turkmenistan since 1991), and Emomali Rahmonov (president of Tajikistan since 1997). While Rahmonov governs Tajikistan with a coalition of secular and religious leaders, and Niyazov rules Turkmenistan on the basis of a personality cult, the political life and governance of Karimov in Uzbekistan typifies the current trend of Central Asian national leaders.

Islam Abduganievich Karimov was born on 30 January 1938, in the ancient and historic city of Samarqand in the southeastern part of the Uzbek SSR.[19] An ethnic Uzbek, Karimov was born into a family of civil servants, a background that provided him with opportunities to pursue higher education and at the same time climb up the higher echelons of public service. In 1983 he was appointed minister of finance of the Uzbek SSR, and in 1986 he became deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers and deputy head of government of the Uzbek SSR as well as chairman of the State Planning Office. Concurrently with his rise through the bureaucracy of the Soviet republic's government, Karimov also rose rapidly in the ranks of the Communist Party of the Uzbek SSR. In 1986 he was appointed first secretary of the Communist Party of the Kashka Darya oblast, a region in southern Uzbekistan that borders Afghanistan. In June 1989 he became first secretary of the central committee of the Communist Party of the Uzbek SSR, and on 24 March 1990, the Supreme Soviet of the Uzbek SSR elected him president.

With the demise of the Soviet Union imminent, in 1990 Karimov became head of the People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (the new name for the former Communist Party of the Uzbek SSR). On 31 August 1991, he declared the independence of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and called for national elections to fill the seats in the revived Oliy Majlis (the Supreme Assembly, Uzbekistan's unicameral parliament that replaced the Supreme Soviet[20]) and to choose the republic's first post-Uzbek SSR president. In a multi-candidate competition and the first nationwide election for president, Karimov was elected to a five-year term as president on 29 December 1991 (four days after the official dissolution of the Soviet Union), with more than 86 per cent of the vote. On 8 December 1992, the Oliy Majlis adopted a new constitution modelled after those of other liberal-democratic governments. On 26 March 1995, in accordance with a national plebiscite, Karimov's period of office was extended to 2000. On 9 January 2000, with only a single token opposition candidate, Karimov was re-elected for another term, which was set to end in 2005. However, on 27 January 2002, in another plebiscite, Uzbek voters extended the presidential term of office from five to seven years, with Karimov now projected to leave office in 2007.[21]

Despite Karimov's longevity in office, liberal-democratic countries have a vested interest in assisting Uzbekistan and the other Central Asian republics

in their transition toward a market economy and democratic polity. Primarily, the discovery of extensive oil and natural gas reserves comparable to those of the Persian Gulf in Uzbekistan, as well as in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, have attracted Western business interests and their investments. From cooperative assistance and training programmes to joint economic ventures and even military alliances, the US government has applied considerable pressure on Karimov to engage in fundamental political and economic reform.[22] Karimov's attempt to effect a transition from the Soviet model to liberal society, however, has resulted in 'a nontraditional form of authoritarianism in which power resides as much in the person of the president as in the office'.[23]

The Constitution of Uzbekistan and subsequent amendments and legislation have in effect shifted the separated powers of the state (as typically found in constitutional democratic governments) to the executive branch, through the president's control over the personnel composition of the People's Democratic Party that provides most of the candidates for the Oliy Majlis, the judiciary, the *hokims* (local governors and city mayors), and the administrators and councils of the *mahallas* (neighborhood associations).[24] In contrast with the Communist Party that controlled the Uzbek government during the Soviet era, today the president controls the Uzbek government through appointments to party and state positions with plenary authority to remove appointees.[25] This form of 'presidentialism', as opposed to party control, has resulted in a powerful Uzbek state run by Karimov and other former Communist elites.[26] Thus, while the state has the façade of an electoral regime by permitting (only government-approved) political parties to compete, it may more accurately be seen as a non-competitive authoritarian regime.[27] One unfortunate consequence of this political hierarchy based on de facto concentration of powers and operated by elites from the Soviet era is the continued use of violent tactics and intimidation, also from that era.

Civil society, religion and nationalism in Uzbekistan

Western nations encouraged the reinvigoration of civil society in Central Asia to protect religious freedom. The idea of civil society minimally requires a set of shared values, even as a basis for diversity and toleration. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the attempt to create shared values based on Marxism-Leninism formally disappeared, leaving a vacuum to be filled by another ideology or public philosophy. In Uzbekistan, as in the other Central Asian republics, the only existing philosophical framework that commands widespread appeal sufficient to lay the foundation for an alternative public philosophy is that of Islam. While approximately 80 per cent of Uzbek citizens are only nominally Muslim (Sunni), the past millennium of Islamic theological development has produced many schools of religious thought throughout Central Asia. The major differences appear to have less to do with doctrine and practice per se than with social ethics. That is, Islamic teachings have steadfastly focused on the moral imperative of the individual to contribute to the

welfare of the poor, and of the state to correct social injustice; nevertheless, diverse opinions exist on how to fulfil adequately this imperative.[28]

Uzbekistan has attempted to maintain its regional sphere of political and economic influence by developing its own Islamic nationalism, while resisting outside radical Islamist influences. With the demise of Marxist-Leninist ideology and the need to develop a new sense of national unity, Karimov embarked on an undertaking to replace the Soviet ideology and doctrines based on the findings of class analysis with a new nationalism to instil commitment to the policies of and compliance with the social and economic objectives of the Uzbek state. Given that Islamic cultural roots are sufficiently deep and Islamic ethical obligations are inherently political, many observers argue that the presence of Islam in Uzbekistan is crucial to developing a national identity as required by civil society.[29]

In classical liberal theory, the state's role is generally that of an umpire among competing individual and group interests, striving to avoid violence through the peaceful resolution of conflict.[30] Beyond guaranteeing basic individual rights, including freedom of speech, association, and religion, as well as maintaining the peace, the liberal state has little interest in authoritarian politics, including a command economy and a totalitarian society. Liberal civil society, then, promotes the importance of freedom of thought, speech, and association, not only with regard to politics but also with regard to religious matters.[31] Consequently, virtually all religious teachings and practices, including participation in politics, are tolerated. With the understanding that the formal institutions of church and state would not commingle, liberal-democracies have generally relegated ecclesiastical institutions and their religious activities to civil society, along with other voluntary associations. While the religious values found in civil society frequently have an impact on politics, as do other values, liberal-democracies have generally been tolerant of diverse and opposed religions and theologies to the point of, but not including, violent disruption of society itself.[32] Nevertheless, as with many other social issues, a grey area seems to envelop that point of tolerance, thus frequently making it difficult to determine when the mingling of religious beliefs and political activity has become 'uncivil'.

Karimov wrestles with these issues as he proclaims the necessity of religious freedom and encourages 'freedom of conscience and religion' for Uzbekistan:

> Every individual has the right to hold his or her own opinion and beliefs, to perform religious rites and rituals. Religion today as a spiritual force facilitates the process of purification [of the soul and society] by exposing lies and hypocracy [sic] and promoting high moral principles.[33]

Yet Karimov also recognises non-religious secular thinking as 'parallel with religion, and possessing the same right to exist'. He believes that the interaction between secular and religious thinking will promote 'the richness, variety, and development of the human race'.

The Uzbek state, then, according to Karimov, must not only provide 'social protection' during and after the transition to a market economy, but it must '*ensure the rights and freedoms of citizens irrespective of their ethnic origin, religious beliefs, social status or political convictions*'.[34] In his defence of individual rights, Karimov calls attention to specific articles in the Constitution of Uzbekistan that acknowledge democratic rights, including religious freedom:

> *Article 13*. Democracy in the Republic of Uzbekistan shall rest on the principles common to all mankind, according to which the ultimate value is the human being, his life, freedom, honour, dignity and other inalienable rights. Democratic rights and freedoms shall be protected by the Constitution and the laws.[35]

> *Article 31*. Freedom of conscience is guaranteed to all. Everyone shall have the right to profess or not to profess any religion. Any compulsory imposition of religion shall be impermissible.[36]

> *Article 61*. Religious organizations and associations shall be separated from the state and equal before law. The state shall not interfere with the activity of religious associations.[37]

The Uzbek constitutional and ostensibly secular state, then, must be tolerant of religion. Karimov, however, also believes that the state has a special interest in religion beyond that typically found in liberal societies. He argues that religion contains universal norms of behaviour that are transmitted from generation to generation; religion is the spiritual dimension of society that influences cultural development. He values the crucial role that religion, especially Islam, plays in assisting individuals to 'overcome the trials of human existence as well as their isolation and alienation from one another'.[38]

Keenly aware of the rich Islamic heritage that has survived 1,400 years, easily outliving Soviet attempts to control and ultimately eradicate religious beliefs, Karimov has been attempting to instill a sense of pride in the historic accomplishments, including the Islamic heritage, and potential of the nation of Uzbekistan. To enhance and strengthen its legitimacy, the government of Uzbekistan has reinterpreted historical events and contributions of individuals of the region to demonstrate the evolutionary development toward the emergence of the Uzbek nation. Particular attention has focused on the historic figure of Amir Temur (Tamerlane, 1336–1405). The Turkmen Mongol conqueror, born in Shakhrisyabz (near Samarqand, Uzbekistan), ultimately subjugated Central Asia, southern Russia, Afghanistan, Mesopotamia, Armenia, Georgia, northern India, and parts of Persia, and unified them under the Moghul Empire (fourteenth–sixteenth centuries). Indeed, Karimov has developed an ideology of the state that places himself in a line of succession of strong national leaders since Tamerlane.[39] The government also

focuses on the historic achievements of the cultural, literary, scientific, and religious flowering of the Islamic renaissance of the medieval area. The Naqshbandi mosque, for example, in preparation for the jubilee celebration held in October 2003, underwent restoration and renovation under the direction of and with financial support from the Uzbek government.

Consequently, despite his public and theoretical support of political liberalism, Karimov nevertheless perceives contemporary liberal society's approach to religious freedom as tolerating narrowly focused, religious organisations advocating extremist causes that threaten social stability and the legitimacy of the state itself. Unable to accept the ruinous outcome of this apparent contradiction, the Uzbek government restricts religious activities for the collective welfare of society. While he wants to encourage society's gravitation toward reliance on the compassionate social character of Islam, Karimov claims that he does not want a narrow religious or political ideology to control public policy in Uzbekistan, as during the Soviet era. He wants to replace the indoctrination of Soviet ideology with the inculcation of liberal political and Islamic ethical values that will provide space in civil society for the free discussion of policy options to achieve the common good. To this end, he argues that Uzbekistan must foster the development of civil society to encourage the emergence of voluntary associations, including religious diversity, and to promote respect for and tolerance of individual rights, including religious freedom.

Islamic social thought does indeed argue that the state has an interest that transcends the necessity of serving merely as an umpire among competing interests.[40] Shared values must be promulgated and inculcated by the state in civil society, including a commitment to individual liberty and religious freedom. In this regard, Karimov frequently refers to Islamic traditionalism, particularly the Sufi *Naqshbandi tarikat* to lay a foundation of shared values in Uzbek civil society.[41] Indeed, to resist those militants who are errantly borrowing from the Islamic past to subvert Uzbekistan's attempt to build a decent society, Karimov appeals to the historic contributions of the Uzbek Islamic heritage: 'Reviving the spiritual originality and traditions of Central Asian Islam takes the ground from under the followers of *imported Islam* as well as the *politicization of Islam* and the *Islamization of policy*.'[42]

In April 1999, in an effort to incorporate Islam into his new nationalism and to deflect popular interest in the fundamentalist teachings of various Islamists, Karimov issued a decree creating the Tashkent Islamic University. Oriented toward Sufi values of the *Naqshbandi tarikat*, the university operates independently of the Uzbek system of higher education, reporting directly to the Cabinet of Ministers.[43] Its charge is to do research and teaching in the history and philosophy of Islam, Islamic law, and information sciences.[44] Reflecting on the importance of Uzbekistan's independence, the university administration states:

> We emphasize that an Independent Motherland, peaceful life and society with democratic principles was our ancestors' dream. Nowadays their

dream is becoming true. There [has now] appeared the possibility of creating a full-scale harmony [that] never existed before and [the] building of [a] well-educated people's city dreamed by Abu Nasr Farabi [d. AD 950].[45]

In their resistance to Soviet ideology, various Uzbek political and religious leaders had frequently appealed to the moral values of the noble traditions contained in their historical literature. In his attempt to make a case for supporting the just, ethical ruler, Karimov, too, frequently appeals to the past, often referring to and citing Abu Nasr al-Farabi, a tenth century Muslim philosopher and the founder of Muslim political philosophy.[46]

Given Uzbekistan's historical and cultural development as influenced by Islam, then, Karimov calls for a synthesis of modern liberal values of religious tolerance and the traditional Islamic values of social welfare with the personal spirituality of Sufi mysticism. However, his cooptation and promulgation of one version of Islam has clashed with Islamists who proclaim a radically different vision for Central Asia.

Islamists and Central Asia

Resisting Karimov's government in Uzbekistan and the other governments in Central Asia, Islamist organisations vary in size and ideology. The organisations are particularly active in the densely populated Ferghana Valley, which stretches through the republics of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Islamic militancy arose in the Uzbek city of Namangan, in the Ferghana Valley, while the Soviet Union was collapsing.[47] With a Muslim population of seven million people, who are primarily ethnic Uzbeks, living in impoverished conditions and under oppressive and corrupt regimes, the Ferghana Valley appeals to Islamists who search for recruits in their attempt to re-establish an Islamic caliphate in Turkestan.

The Islamists' religious training has been influenced essentially by two major sects of Sunni Islam: Deobandism and Wahhabism. Operating in Pakistan during the late 1980s, several Deobandi *madrasas* reserved places specifically for Islamists from Central Asia, where they were taught strict codes of Islamic adherence, including a version of jihad as a political struggle. The Deobandis, as well as the Taliban in Afghanistan, influenced the first generation of Islamic militants in the Ferghana Valley. Similarly, although it arrived in the Ferghana Valley as early as 1912, the influence of Wahhabism was initially negligible in the face of the overwhelming presence of Sufi, moderate Islamic traditions. However, with the financial backing of Saudi Arabia in the 1980s, the influence of Wahhabism in the Ferghana Valley increased dramatically. Financial aid from Saudi Arabia also supported the *mujahedeen* in Afghanistan, who were resisting the Soviet military invasion, as well as the *madrasas* that trained Central Asian Islamists, primarily from Uzbekistan. The more prominent Islamist organisations include the Islamic Renaissance Party,

the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the Eastern Turkestan Islamic Movement, and *Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami* (Party of Islamic Liberation).

Established in 1990 by Muslim Tartars in the Soviet Union, the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) advocated adoption of the shar'ia in Russia.[48] Under the liberalising policies of glasnost and perestroika, the IRP registered as a political party and encouraged the establishment of separate branches in each of the Soviet republics. Although the party was banned in the Central Asian republics, the IRP first appeared in Tajikistan in October 1991, calling for the revival of Islam and the independence of Tajikistan. Plunging the republic into civil war (1992–97), the IRP composed the majority of the membership of the United Tajik Opposition and formed military units to fight against the Communist-controlled government. By 1997, Russia and Uzbekistan intervened to end the war and brokered a peace that created a coalition government, which includes the IRP. The IRP has had mixed success elsewhere in Central Asia. While its popular appeal has been extremely weak in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, the IRP has spread rapidly in the Ferghana Valley of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. With government repression, several splinter groups with more radical approaches, such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, have emerged.

In the Ferghana Valley, the IRP demanded that strict adherence to Islamic codes of prayer and dress be observed in Namangan and that President Karimov declare Uzbekistan to be an Islamic state. With the government's refusal to meet their demands, more radical members formed the *Adolat* (Justice) Party, which was banned, along with the IRP, by the government. After several confrontations with government authorities, including the arrest of members of the IRP and the *Adolat* Party, several Islamic activists fled to Tajikistan and then to Afghanistan. After participating in the Tajik civil war and studying in Taliban *madrasas*, the Islamists returned to Uzbekistan in 1999 to found the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU).[49] As a coalition of Islamic militants from Uzbekistan and other Central Asian republics, the IMU initially opposed the secular government of Uzbekistan as a result of the government's failure to support sufficiently renewal of the Islamic faith. The IMU has been active primarily in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, using car bombs and assassinations to target government buildings and officials, as well as taking foreign and domestic hostages. IMU militants operate throughout Central Asia, South Asia, and parts of the Middle East, including Afghanistan, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. In 2001, the leaders of the IMU called for the formation of an Islamic Movement of Turkestan to unify fundamentalist Islamic groups in Central Asia with those in the Caucasus region, especially in Chechnya. Their objective is to form an Islamic caliphate that extends from the Muslim region of western China on the east to the Black Sea on the west.

The Eastern Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) operates primarily in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China, which borders the Central Asian republics of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.[50] Established in the

1980s, the ETIM evokes memories of the short-lived 'Republic of Uyghuristan' or 'Islamic Republic of East Turkestan' proclaimed in 1933 and again in 1944 before Chinese annexation after 1949. In tandem with the East Turkestan Islamic Party, the ETIM calls for the liberation of the Muslim Uyghurs from Chinese domination and their reunification with other Turkic peoples of Central Asia (Western Turkestan). The ETIM frequently joins forces with the IMU to engage in subversive and terrorist activities, including political assassination, economic sabotage, and attacks on political and civilian targets, in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Xinjiang.

Both the IMU and the ETIM, along with other Islamist organisations and individuals, have been closely associated with the Taliban and Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda network in Afghanistan. The organisations had received financial assistance as well as terrorist and guerrilla training from al-Qaeda prior to the US invasion of Afghanistan in its war on terrorism. As a result of the military triumph of the Afghan Northern Alliance and the US-led coalition, personnel from the IMU and ETIM who fought alongside the Taliban suffered substantial losses of personnel as well as clandestine bases from which to operate. Nevertheless, these Islamist organisations continue to receive support from other Islamic groups and patrons in the Middle East and Central and South Asia as well as continuing to engage in lucrative drug trafficking.[51]

Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami (Party of Islamic Liberation) also calls for the creation of an Islamic caliphate in Turkestan.[52] Influenced by Wahhabist teachings, the *Hizb ut-Tahrir* emerged in the Middle East in the 1950s, but is now based in London. The party publicly supports Islamists actively engaged in violent and illegal political activities to bring about the caliphate; however, *Hizb ut-Tahrir* does not publicly advocate the use of violence against the governments of the Central Asian republics. Nevertheless, the party has also been banned throughout Central Asia. *Hizb ut-Tahrir* prefers to proselytise among the disaffected and the poor, as well as the young middle class who are educated but unemployed. Furthermore, with its popularity and adherence having spread throughout the Ferghana Valley and now expanding into Kazakhstan, *Hizb ut-Tahrir* is emerging in public opinion as a respectable, non-violent political alternative to the regimes in power.[53]

Karimov and Islamism

While he advocates the importance of Islam in contributing to the rebirth of an independent, just, and progressive Uzbekistan, Karimov also maintains that among the numerous Islamic organisations in Uzbek society, the obtrusive teachings and practices of certain militant groups are undermining that synthesis. According to Karimov, Islamists want to impose 'alien spiritual ideals and values' that will disrupt Uzbek society and ultimately return Uzbekistan to 'medieval obscurantism'.[54] He argues that Islamic militants, calling themselves 'fighters for faith', attempt to justify their political activism by preaching a perverted understanding of Islam. Karimov has

condemned both international terrorism and religious and fundamentalist extremism, and declared them to be the greatest threats to Uzbek stability and sovereignty.[55]

In addition to public moral exhortations, Karimov also relies on his government's broad interpretation of constitutional power to restrict unauthorised religious activities in the name of constitutional safeguards protecting individual rights:

> *Article 20*. The exercise of rights and freedoms by a citizen shall not encroach on the lawful interests, rights and freedoms of other citizens, the state or society.[56]

To reduce political threats to Karimov's regime, the Uzbek government has banned most opposition political parties, both secular and Islamic, including the *Erk* (Freedom) Democratic Party, the *Birlik* (Unity) Party, the *Adolat* Party, and the IRP.[57] And to defend the ostensibly secular Uzbek state, the government has banned independent Islamic mosques and organisations. The primary targets of the ban include followers of Wahhabism, the Army of Islam, the IMU, and *Hizb ut-Tahrir*.[58]

These and many other non-state-approved, independent Islamic organisations are often characterised as fundamentalist movements advocating teachings at odds with the ethos of toleration and pluralism. *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, for one, declaims the necessity of changing any and all corrupt societies in which Muslims live into an Islamic society to be incorporated into a grand caliphate:[59]

> [*Hizb ut-Tahrir*] aims to do this by firstly changing the society's existing thoughts to Islamic thoughts so that such thoughts become the public opinion among the people, who are then driven to implement and act upon them. Secondly, the Party works to change the emotions in the society until they become Islamic emotions that accept only that which pleases Allah (swt) and rebel against and detest anything which angers Allah (swt). Finally, the Party works to change the relationships in the society until they become Islamic relationships, which proceed in accordance with the laws and solutions of Islam. These actions which the Party performs are political actions, since they relate to the affairs of the people in accordance with the Shari'ah rules and solutions, and politics in Islam is looking after the affairs of the people, either in opinion or in execution or both, according to the laws and solutions of Islam.[60]

With regard to Uzbekistan, *Hizb ut-Tahrir* criticises the secular nature of the constitution for embracing 'the separation of religion from state' and contradicting 'the doctrine and ideology of the Qur'an'.[61] Furthermore, it perceives the real intent of the constitution as facilitating the West's growing military presence in Central Asia, which threatens pure Islam: 'This constitution

allowed the Jewish Karimov on behalf of Uzbekistan Muslims to sign a deal with the United States and take part in its crusade against Islam and Muslims'. *Hizb ut-Tahrir* supports those who believe it is their 'primary function to protect Islam and fight the enemies of Allah'.[62]

In addition to proselytising and social activism, many militant organisations in Uzbekistan also engage in political assassination and guerrilla warfare. For example, in August 1999, the IMU formally announced 'the Jihad against the tyrannical government of Uzbekistan and the puppet Islam Karimov and his henchmen'.[63] Calling on faithful Muslims to defend fellow believers who have been subjected to imprisonment and torture, the IMU proclaimed that 'the Mujahedeen of the Islamic Movement, after their experience in warfare [in Afghanistan and Tajikistan], have completed their training and are ready to establish the Blessed Jihad'. Indeed, the IMU has been accused by the Uzbek government of insurrection and participation in earlier subversive activities in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, cooperation with the Taliban in Afghanistan and Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda network, and armed attacks on the Uzbek state, including the killing of police officers in the Ferghana Valley and the deadly but failed assassination attempt on President Karimov in Tashkent in February 1999.[64]

To curb the influence of Islamic militancy, in 1998 the Oliy Majlis enacted the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations to restrict the activities of virtually all religious denominations, including non-state-approved Islamic organisations.[65] Under this law, in addition to outlawing proselytism, all religious organisations must be registered with and approved by the Uzbek government before they may conduct worship activities and religious rituals as well as conduct other social programmes. With regard to registered Islamic organisations, the primary target of the legislation, only those imams, mosques, religious practices, and publications that have been approved by the Spiritual Directorate for Muslims are permitted. The Directorate reports to the Committee for Religious Affairs under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, with its members appointed by the president.

The attempts by the government of Islam Karimov to deal with problems of Islamic extremism, however, have brought into question the prudence of its use of harsh strictures on religious dissent and thus Karimov's own commitment to individual rights, including religious freedom, and the rule of law. The US Department of State and the US Commission of International Religious Freedom have cited abundant instances in Uzbekistan involving breaches of rule of law, including arbitrary and unlawful deprivation of life; disappearances; torture and other cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment and punishment; arbitrary arrest, detention, and exile; denial of fair public trial; and arbitrary interference with personal privacy, family, and home.[66] International non-governmental organisations, such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe,

have also documented numerous cases of human rights abuses involving religious beliefs and activities in Uzbekistan.[67]

These organisations claim that thousands of individuals have been arbitrarily arrested, detained under inhumane conditions, kept incommunicado, tortured, and frequently killed by Uzbek police and security forces. Individuals publicly accused of various infractions of the law – from conspiracy to overthrow the government to worshipping in unapproved mosques, possessing banned literature, or growing a beard – have been convicted by Uzbek courts in unfair trials, as adjudged by standards found in international agreements to which the Republic of Uzbekistan is a signatory.[68] The use of forced confessions as well as refusal to consider evidence presented by the defence is pandemic, with sentences of punishments frequently disproportionate to the crimes alleged to have been committed. In addition to the hundreds who have died while in custody or been executed after sentencing, it is estimated that 7,500 individuals are presently incarcerated for conviction of various crimes related to religious activities. However, it may well be the case, as noted by the US Department of State, that 'the [Uzbek] government does not consider this repression to be directed against religious freedom itself but instead against those who desire to overthrow the secular order'.[69]

Implications for stability

Socio-religious mores and practices, as well as a considerable presence of the state, are found throughout Uzbekistan and the other Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan, as Islamic teachings and rituals have survived Soviet ideology and policies. The overwhelming task of reorienting individual values and expectations as well as economic and social institutions and practices in these newly emerging Central Asian republics suggests that meaningful change, if it occurs at all, will be gradual and evolutionary. The government bureaucracies, state policies, and the leaders of the ruling political parties generally imitate those of their Soviet predecessors. Nevertheless, to varying degrees, the republics have initiated modest reforms, from introduction of official currency exchange rates and limited market practices to facilitate economic growth, to relaxation of certain restrictions on religious activities to encourage diversity. Yet serious implications for social stability exist as the Central Asian governments resist further liberal-democratic reforms in the face of real and perceived threats from Islamist organisations.

Indeed, the limited application of liberal values, market techniques, and democratic practices has frequently been used by those already in positions of power to resist further efforts to create a civil society, resulting in insecurity in the region.[70] With the transition from the Soviet system to liberal-democracy, the period since independence has been punctuated with eruptions of social instability, primarily of ethnic and religious conflict. This, in turn, may well have the effect of undermining the efficacy of long-term economic and political

reforms. Islam Karimov's government policies in Uzbekistan have been based on the promulgation of select Islamic interpretations and values that in a liberal-democracy would typically be carried out by voluntary associations in civil society. The use of state violence coupled with disregard for rule of law to proscribe unacceptable interpretations and perceived threats from Islamists has resulted in considerable human rights abuses. Indeed, it appears that the Uzbek state has in effect nationalised one preferred version of Islam, thus marginalising all other interpretations to the point of persecution and ultimately, then, undermining the promise and possibility of civil society itself.[71] Karimov has merely replaced the former political ideology of the Soviet era with a government-approved religious public philosophy, thus maintaining the Soviet bureaucratic model he inherited. One public opinion survey has found a growing lack of confidence among urban Uzbeks in Karimov's government being able to improve the economy and a belief that it is increasingly likely that 'Islamic extremists will destabilize the government', as a result of failure to institute democratic reforms and of increased repression.[72]

Yet other approaches to Islam and nationalism may hold promise. In 1992, Tajikistan descended into civil war (1992–97), as parliamentary disputes led to conflict between pro-Communist forces and Islamic militants.[73] With military and diplomatic intervention from Uzbekistan and Russia, the war ended with an agreement permitting the militants to share power in the Tajik government. Concomitant with resurgent Islam, then, the political leaders of Tajikistan have also seen an opportunity to incorporate alternative Islamic voices into their development of Tajik nationalism and the crafting of public policies. Instead of restricting marginalised interests, those interests have been brought into the political process, which has had a moderating effect on extremist political demands. While the government of President Emomali Rahmonov still encounters political resistance and charges of corruption, the potential for social conflict has diminished significantly, as a result of his willingness to participate in a coalition government. For example, on the Global Terrorism Index complied by the World Markets Research Centre, Tajikistan is ranked twenty-second riskiest with regard to the likelihood of terrorism, in contrast with the following countries that are ranked as higher risks for terrorism: Columbia (first), Israel (second), the United States (fourth), and Great Britain (tenth).[74]

Islam and nationalism, then, have proven to be an explosive combination as well as a source of stability similar to that in many regions of the world. One key requirement to achieve social stability is the presence in civil society of a culture that encourages political pluralism and tolerance of religious diversity. Yet such a culture is a necessary but insufficient condition for stability, as pluralism and diversity are the very elements of instability. Limits must also be placed on the behaviour and actions that follow the potentially unstable combination of pluralism and diversity. If the model of liberal-democracy is correct, those limits must be rooted in respect for individual rights and fear of government authority. The Central Asian republics evince a

half-hearted approach to pluralism and diversity, while displaying immoderate willingness to exercise swift and often brutal government repression. The missing variable in the equation is a genuine effort by the republics' governments to instill respect for the rights and dignity of the individual in a culture that has substantial suspicions of any challenges to long-held community values. Indeed, if the Central Asian republics are in a transitory period between the Soviet practices of the past and a liberal-democratic future, their governments have a unique window of opportunity to guide their societies toward stability with diversity.

A crucial component of teaching respect for Islamic achievements of the past and values of the present is the concomitant recognition of Islam's historic respect for religious tolerance and diversity. Religious freedom, then, would appear to be the bridge between past and future. As long as freedom of religious expression is permitted, the politically active presence of Islamic fundamentalism is likely to pose only a modest threat to the stability of the political regimes of Central Asia.[75] Alternately, the use of harsh treatment to silence opposition Islamic movements is likely to increase their popular appeal, thus posing a moderate to extreme threat to political stability, depending on the nature and magnitude of the repression.

Notes

1 Field research conducted in February, July, and August of 2003, and June and July of 2004, in various locations of Uzbekistan, including Bukhara, Gala-Assiya, Samarqand, Tashkent and Termez; many thanks to A.A., B.I., D.M., H.S., J.M., O.M., T.H., G.A., S.M, Z.T, N.T., and V.S. for first-hand knowledge and on-site explanations.

2 For a historical account of the development of 'civil society', see Ehrenberg (1999). On various approaches to understanding the significance of civil society, see Barber (1999), pp. 9–29; Cohen (1998), pp. 35–40; and Fine (1997), pp. 7–28.

3 See, for example, Shahrani (1995), pp. 273–79.

4 Gorbachev (1987).

5 Nelson and Kuzes (1998), pp. 480–503; and Starr (1999), pp. 28–29.

6 Bourdeaux (1995), pp. 113–17.

7 Alaolmolki (2001), pp. 18–22.

8 Stalin (1975a), p. 104.

9 Gleason (1997), passim.

10 Stalin (1975b) pp. 130–31.

11 Smith (1996), pp. 3–5.

12 Stalin (1975c), p. 194.

13 Akiner (1995), pp. 337–38.

14 Stalin (1975d), pp. 148–51; see also Stalin (1975e), p. 160.

15 Gregorian (2003), pp. 46–47.

16 Stalin (1975f), pp. 202–15.

17 Ibrahim (1993), p. 24.

18 Akiner (1996), pp. 342–43.

19 The following biographical information on Islam Karimov is taken primarily from the following sources: Overseas-Post Organization (1996), pp. 5–19; Press Service of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, www.press-service.uz/eng/president_eng/presi dent_eng.htm (accessed 19 May 2002); Encarta Encyclopedia, www.encarta.msn.com/find/

Concise.asp?ti=0013B000 (accessed 20 October 2001); and the Umid Foundation, www.umid.uz/Main/Uzbekistan/President/president.html (accessed 1 June 2002).

20 In a referendum held on 27 January 2002, Uzbek voters approved the creation of a bicameral national legislature.

21 Speculation on the future successor to Islam Karimov has focused on his older daughter, Gulnara Karimov, appointed as adviser to the Uzbek ambassador in Moscow. See, for example, Pannier (2003).

22 Crucial to the success and survival of this transformation is the reinvigoration and strengthening of civil society through educational assistance programmes. See Pottenger (2004), passim.

23 Easter (1997), p. 209.

24 See, for example, Sievers (2002), pp. 92–158.

25 Easter (1997), pp. 199–201.

26 Polat (1999), p. 138.

27 Levitsky and Way (2002), pp. 54–55.

28 Armstrong (1993), p. 143; see also Smith (2001), pp. 114ff; Tazmini (2001), pp. 63–83; and Allworth (1990).

29 See, for example, Hanks (1999), pp. 159–63; and Abduvakhitov (1995), pp. 295–302.

30 See, for example, Reiman (1994), pp. 19–37; and Hardin (1998), pp. 29–34.

31 Tierny (1996), pp. 36–42.

32 Neuhaus (1984), pp. 20–37.

33 Karimov (1992), p. 18.

34 Ibid. p. 14 (original emphasis).

35 *Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan* (1992), p. 10.

36 Ibid. p. 13.

37 Ibid. p. 18.

38 Karimov (1998), p. 20.

39 March (2001), pp. 371–84.

40 See Galston (1998), pp. 107–11; and Miller (1999), pp. 170–83.

41 Goble (2000).

42 Karimov (2000), p. 7 (emphases added).

43 Regarding celebratory accolades for Islam Karimov's use of Naqshbandi Sufism from the Islamic Supreme Council of America, see Mirahmadi (1999), passim.

44 'The Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan', in *Tashkent Islamic University*, (2000), pp. 5–6.

45 *Tashkent Islamic University* (2000), p. 10.

46 See, for example, Karimov (1998), pp. 5, 89, 91, 161–62; see also Allworth (1990), pp. 20 (on 12 natural qualities essential in a perfect sovereign) and 277; Butterworth (1992), pp. 26–37; and Alfarabi (2001).

47 Rashid (2002a).

48 Rashid (2002b) pp. 98–102.

49 On the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, see www.cns.miis.edu/research/wtc01/imu.htm (accessed 15 August 2002).

50 See the website defending the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement at www.uygur.org/wunn02/2002_02_03.htm (accessed 15 October 2003).

51 Cornell and Spector (2002), pp. 196–97.

52 On *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, see www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org (accessed 1 August 2002).

53 Atal (2003), pp. 99–100.

54 Karimov (1998), p. 16.

55 Press Service (1996–2002).

56 *Constitution* (1992), p. 12.

57 Roy (2001), p. 57.

58 Ibid. pp. 53–63.

59 International Crisis Group (2003a).

60 *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, 'Hizb ut-Tahrir's Work', at: www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org (accessed 1 August 2002), p. 2.

61 *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, 'The Constitution of Uzbekistan is the Law of Disbelief and Falsehood', at: www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org (accessed 1 August 2002), p. 1.

62 *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, 'And kill them wherever you find them, and turn them out from where they have turned you out (2:191)', www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org (accessed 1 August 2002), p. 2.

63 'The Call to Jihad by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan,' in Rashid (2002b) pp. 247–48.

64 According to one account, the Islamist assassins appear to have had ties to Osama bin Laden and other Central Asian terrorist groups; see Yakubov (2000).

65 Beckwith (2000), pp. 997–1039; see also Ibrahim (1993), pp. 26–27.

66 See Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (2002), pp. 2–22; and US Commission on International Religious Freedom (2002).

67 See, for example, Human Rights Watch (2001); and Amnesty International (2001a).

68 Amnesty International (2001b).

69 Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (1999), p. 6.

70 Hunter (2001), pp. 65–89.

71 Polat (1999), pp. 142–43.

72 Office of Research, US Department of State (2003), p. 3.

73 Payne (1996), pp. 381–82.

74 'Global Terrorism Index', *The Economist*, 30 August 2003, p. 74.

75 International Crisis Group (2003b).

References

Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan (1992), Tashkent: Uzbekiston.

'Global Terrorism Index', *The Economist*, 30 August 2003.

Tashkent Islamic University (2000), Tashkent: Nashriyoti.

Abduvakhitov, A. (1995) 'Independent Uzbekistan: A Muslim Community in Development', in Bourdeaux, M. (ed.) *The Politics of Religion in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, New York: M.E. Sharpe, pp. 293–305.

Alaolmolki, N. (2001) *Life After the Soviet Union: The Newly Independent Republics of the Transcaucasus and Central Asia*, Albany: State University of New York Press.

Alfarabi, (2001) *The Political Writings: Selected Aphorisms and Other Texts*, Butterworth, C. (trans.), Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Allworth, E. (1990) *The Modern Uzbeks: From the Fourteenth Century to the Present*, Stanford: Hoover Institution Press.

Akiner, S. (1996) 'Uzbekistan and the Uzbeks', in Smith, G. (ed.) *The Nationalities Question in the Past-Soviet States*, London: Longman, pp. 334–47.

Amnesty International (2001a) *Annual Report 2001: Uzbekistan*, at www.web.amnesty.org/web/ar2001.nsf/webeurcountries/UZBEKISTAN?OpenDocument (accessed 9 November 2001).

Amnesty International (2001b) *Uzbekistan: The Rhetoric of Human Rights Protection: Briefing for the United Nations Human Rights Committee*, at: web.amnesty.org/aidoc/aidoc_pdf.nsf/index/EUR620062001 ENGLISH/$File/EUR6200601.pdf (accessed 1 June 2001).

Armstrong, K. (1993) *A History of God: The 4,000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, New York: Ballantine Books.

Atal, S. (2003) 'Central Asian Geopolitics and U.S. Policy in the Region: The Post-11 September Era', *Mediterranean Quarterly*, vol. 14, pp. 95–109.

Barber, B. (1999) 'Clansmen, Consumers, and Citizens: Three Takes on Civil Society', in Fullinwider, R. (ed.) *Civil Society, Democracy, and Civic Renewal*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Beckwith, G. (2000) 'Uzbekistan, Islam, Communism, and Religious Liberty – An Appraisal of Uzbekistan's Law "On freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations"', *Brigham Young University Law Review*, vol. 3, pp. 997–1048.

Bourdeaux, M. (1995) 'Glasnost and the Gospel: The Emergence of Religious Pluralism', in Bourdeaux, M. (ed.) *The Politics of Religion in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, New York: M.E. Sharpe, pp. 113–27.

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (2002) *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – 2001: Uzbekistan*, Washington, DC: US Department of State, 4 March at: www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/eur/8366.htm (accessed 28 July 2002).

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (1999) *Annual Report on International Religious Freedom for 1999: Uzbekistan*, Washington, DC: US Department of State, 9 September, at: www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/ irf/irf_rpt/1999/irf_uzbekist99.html (accessed 9 November 2001).

Butterworth, C. (1992) 'Political Islam: The Origins', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 524, pp. 26–37.

Cohen, J. (1998) 'Interpreting the Notion of Civil Society', in Walzer, M. (ed.) *Toward a Global Civil Society*, Rhode Island: Berghahn Books, pp. 35–40.

Cornell, S. and Spector, R. (2002) 'Central Asia: More than Islamic Extremists', *Washington Quarterly*, vol. 25, pp. 193–206.

Easter, G. (1997) 'Preference for Presidentialism: Postcommunist Regime Change in Russia and the NIS', *World Politics*, vol. 49, pp. 184–211.

Ehrenberg, J. (1999) *Civil Society: The Critical History of an Idea*, New York: New York University Press.

Fine, R. (1997) 'Civil Society Theory, Enlightenment and Critique', in Fine, R. and Rai S., (eds) *Civil Society: Democratic Perspectives*, London: Frank Cass, pp. 7–28.

Galston, W. (1998) 'Progressive Politics and Communitarian Culture', in Walzer, M. (ed.) *Toward a Global Civil Society*, Rhode Island: Berghahn Books, pp. 107–11.

Gleason, G. (1997) *The Central Asian States: Discovering Independence*, Boulder: Westview Press.

Goble, P. (2000) 'Uzbekistan: Analysis from Washington – Fighting Fundamentalism with Sufism', Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty at: www.rferl.org/nca/features/2000/09/f.ru. 000911132828.html (accessed 11 September 2000).

Gorbachev, M. (1987) *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World*, New York: Harper & Row.

Gregorian, V. (2003) *Islam: A Mosaic, Not a Monolith*, Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.

Hanks, R. (1999) 'Civil Society and Identity in Uzbekistan: The Emergent Role of Islam', in Ruffin, M. and Waugh, D. (eds) *Civil Society in Central Asia*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, pp. 158–79.

Hardin, T. (1998) 'Private and Public Roles in Civil Society', in Walzer, M. (ed.) *Toward a Global Civil Society*, Rhode Island: Berghahn Books, pp. 29–34.

Human Rights Watch (2001) *World Report 2001: Uzbekistan*, at: www.hrw.org/wr2k1/ europe/uzbekistan.html (accessed 9 November 2001).

Hunter, S. (2001) 'Religion, Politics, and Security in Central Asia', *SAIS Review*, vol. 21, pp. 65–89.

Ibrahim, D. (1993) *The Islamization of Central Asia: A Case Study of Uzbekistan*, Leicester: The Islamic Foundation.

International Crisis Group (2003a) 'Radical Islam in Central Asia: Responding to Hizb ut-Tahrir', *ICG Asia Report*, no. 58.

International Crisis Group (2003b) 'Central Asia: Islam and the State', *ICG Asia Report*, no. 59, 10 July.

Karimov, I. (2000) *Uzbekistan Today*, Tashkent: InfoCentre OPRUz.

Karimov, I. (1998) *Uzbekistan on the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Uzbekiston.

Karimov, I. (1997) 'Conference Address', in *Peace, Stability, Cooperation: International Conference 'Central Asia – A Nuclear Weapons Free Zone'*, Tashkent: Information Agency 'Jahon', pp. 26–34.

Karimov, I. (1992) *Uzbekistan: The Road of Independence and Progress*, Tashkent: Uzbekiston.

Levitsky, S. and Way, L. (2002) 'Elections without Democracy: The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism', *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 13, pp. 51–65.

March, A. (2001) 'The Use and Abuse of History: "National Ideology" as Transcendent Object in Islam Karimov's "Ideology of National Independence"', *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 21, pp. 371–84.

Miller, D. (1999) 'Communitarianism: Left, Right and Centre', in Avnon, D. and de-Shalit, A. (eds) *Liberalism and Its Practice*, London: Routledge, pp. 170–83.

Mirahmadi, H. (1999) 'The Islamic Renaissance of Uzbekistan', *The Muslim Magazine*, vol. 2, www.jahon.tiv.uz/Z_P_News/muslim.html (accessed 20 October 2003).

Nelson, L. and Kuzes, I. (1998) 'Russian Economic Reform and the Restructuring of Interests', *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization*, vol. 6, pp. 480–503.

Neuhaus, R. (1984) *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans.

Office of Research, US Department of State (2003) 'Urban Uzbekistanis in Mild Discomfort at Home; Are There Possible Consequences for Karimov?' *Central Asia Opinion Analysis*, 21 October.

Overseas-Post Organization (1996) *Islom Karimov Steers Uzbekistan On Its Own Way*, Nuremberg: Dr Harnisch Verlags GmbH.

Pannier, B. (2003) 'Central Asia: Presidents' Daughters Emerging as Unlikely Political Forces in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan', Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, at: www.rferl.org/nca/features/2003/09/24092003155844.asp (accessed 28 October 2003).

Payne, J. (1996) 'Tajikistan and the Tajiks', in Smith, G. (ed.), *The Nationalities Question in the Post-Soviet States*, London: Longman, pp. 367–84.

Polat, A. (1999) 'Can Uzbekistan Build Democracy and Civil Society?', in Ruffin, M. and Waugh, D. (eds) *Civil Society in Central Asia*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, pp. 135–57.

Pottenger, J. (2004) 'Civil Society, the Economy, and Educational Assistance in Former Soviet Republics', *International Journal of Business Administration*, vol. 27, pp. 851–68.

Press Service (1996–2002) *Annotations to the Collection of Works by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan: Islam Karimov*, Tashkent: InfoCentre OPRUz.

Rashid, A. (2002a) 'They're Only Sleeping: Why Militant Islamicists [sic] in Central Asia Aren't Going to Go Away', *New Yorker*, 7 January, www.newyorker.com/fact/content/?020114fa_FACT (accessed 2 September 2003).

Rashid, A. (2002b) *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia*, New York: Penguin Books.

Reiman, J. (1994) 'Liberalism and Its Critics', in Delaney, C. (ed.) *The Liberalism–Communitarianism Debate*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 19–37.

Roy, O. (2001) '*Qibla* and the Government House: The Islamist Networks', *SAIS Review*, vol. 21, pp. 53–63.

Shahrani, M. (1995) 'Islam and the Political Culture of "Scientific Atheism" in Post-Soviet Central Asia', in Bourdeaux, M. (ed.) *Politics of Religion in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, New York: M.E. Sharpe, pp. 273–92.

Sievers, E. (2002) 'Uzbekistan's Mahalla: From Soviet to Absolutist Residential Community Associations', *Journal of International and Comparative Law at Chicago-Kent*, 2002, vol. 2, pp. 92–158.

Smith, G. (1996) 'The Soviet State and Nationalities Policy', in Smith, G. (ed.) *The Nationalities Question in the Post-Soviet States*, London: Longman, pp. 2–22.

Smith, H. (2001) *Why Religion Matters: The Fate of the Human Spirit in an Age of Disbelief*, San Francisco: HarperCollins.

Stalin, J. (1975a) 'Report on the National Question', in *Marxism and the National–Colonial Question*, San Francisco: Proletarian Publishers, pp. 100–8.

Stalin, J. (1975b) 'The Policy of the Soviet Government on the National Question in Russia', in *Marxism and the National–Colonial Question*, pp. 122–35.

Stalin, J. (1975c) 'The Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics', in *Marxism and the National–Colonial Question*, pp. 184–96.

Stalin, J. (1975d) 'Theses on the Immediate Tasks of the Party in the National Question', in *Marxism and the National–Colonial Question*, pp. 136–52.

Stalin, J. (1975e) 'Report on the Immediate Tasks of the Party in the National Question', in *Marxism and the National–Colonial Question*, pp. 153–64.

Stalin, J. (1975f) 'Theses on National Factors in Party and State Affairs' in *Marxism and the National-Colonial Question*, pp. 202–15

Starr, S. (1999) 'Civil Society in Central Asia', in Ruffin, M. and Waugh, D. (eds) *Civil Society in Central Asia*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, pp. 27–33.

Tazmini, G. (2001) 'The Islamic Revival in Central Asia: A Potent Force or a Misconception?' *Central Asian Survey*, 2001, vol. 20, pp. 63–83.

Tierny, B. (1996) 'Religious Rights: A Historical Perspective', in Reynolds, N. and Cole Durham Jr, W. (eds) *Religious Liberty in Western Thought*, Atlanta: Scholars Press, pp. 29–57.

US Commission on International Religious Freedom (2002), *Report on Uzbekistan*, Washington, DC: May.

Yakubov, O. (2000) *The Pack of Wolves: The Blood Trail of Terror*, Moscow: Veche Publishers.

8 Islamisation and politics in Southeast Asia

The contrasting cases of Malaysia and Indonesia

Greg Fealy

If a society becomes more Islamic, will its politics follow suit? If there are growing numbers of Muslims praying in mosques, will there inevitably be more Islamic politicians in parliament and will their agenda be more exclusively Islamic? In the case of Southeast Asia, which is home to almost one-fifth of the world's 1.3 billion Muslims, such questions are especially germane as many of the region's Muslim communities have become more self-consciously Islamic in recent decades. Judging by media reporting and some academic writings, many journalists and scholars of Southeast Asia are convinced that the growing Islamic religiosity has produced a stronger, more assertive Islamic politics. Indeed, many write as if Islamisation[1] leads inexorably to Islamism, that is, the commitment to implement comprehensively an ideological vision of Islam in the state and society. Thus, for many observers, Islamisation is inherently problematic because they believe it is producing less tolerant and more radical Muslims.[2]

In practice, the link between religiosity and political behaviour is complex. Religiosity can take a great many forms according to the tendencies of its adherents, ranging from the puritanical, fundamentalist and conservative to the liberal and reformist. Particularly under the impact of globalisation, contemporary religiosity is often highly eclectic and hybridised in its melding of local and foreign practices. Just as religiosity can be highly variegated, so too can be its political manifestations. Fundamentalists, that is those who espouse a literal implementation of what they deem to be the 'fundamental' teachings of their faith, tend to emphasise the role of the state in upholding community piety. Adherence to religious teachings, they argue, is too important to be left to individuals; the state must ensure that God's Law prevails, for the good of both the individual and the community. It is incumbent on all Muslims to see that sinfulness, whether in the public or private sphere, is disallowed.

For those with a liberal tendency, faith is usually a personal matter. Not only is it dangerous for civil liberties to have the state intruding into religious affairs, it is also ineffective. The state may force outward compliance with religious law, but it cannot command sincere devotion to God or genuine spiritual commitment. These must come from within the individual believer.

Thus, the public and private sphere should be separated and political discourse should be 'deconfessionalised'.[3] So assertions that Islamisation leads to Islamism are, at best, only partly valid. In reality, much depends on the type of Islamisation. A conservative religious trend may well flow through to politics, generating a conducive environment for rising Islamism, whereas a liberal religious trend can undermine Islamism and support state secularism.

Southeast Asia offers instructive case studies in comparative Islamisation and politics. It has great diversity of religious expression across the region's Islamic communities and swift rates of change in religiosity, particularly in urban areas. In some of its nations, majority Islamic communities dominate national affairs; in others, Muslims are an oppressed and restive minority. The political systems in which Muslims find themselves range from a sultanate (Brunei), military dictatorship (Burma) and communist states (Vietnam and Laos) to varying forms of democracy, none of which are fully liberal (Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Cambodia). The Islamic communities in each of these states have varying degrees of connection with the global *umma* and differing levels of openness to outside influence. While the majority of the region's Muslims are tolerant of and have harmonious relations with other religious communities, there are nonetheless small radical sections that are not. In recent years, Southeast Asia has become a base for terrorist groups, most notably Jemaah Islamiyah, which has carried out a number of major attacks since 2000 resulting in the death of at least 240 people.

This chapter focuses on two countries, Malaysia and Indonesia, which are home to 96 per cent of Southeast Asia's Muslims. Both societies have majority Muslim populations which have undergone rapid Islamisation in recent decades. But the dynamics of their Islamic politics are markedly different. In Malaysia, Islamisation has resulted in greater Islamism and legalism; in Indonesia, it has had more pluralistic and liberal manifestations. In the following discussion, I describe first the general features of Islam in Southeast Asia, then examine the specific nature of Islamisation in Malaysia and Indonesia and the political role of Islam. I will argue that the long period of authoritarian rule in Indonesia combined with the greater heterogeneity of its Islamic community accounts for the more pluralistic quality of its political Islam.

Historical patterns of Islamisation

Muslims are the largest single religious community in contemporary Southeast Asia. About 207 million, or 45 per cent, of the region's 470 million inhabitants are Muslim.[4] Of these, 90 per cent live in Indonesia, which has 190 million Muslims (88 per cent of its population) – the largest Islamic community in the world.[5] There are two other majority Muslim nations: Malaysia, which has 12 million Muslims (55 per cent of the national population and 6 per cent of Southeast Asia's total) and Brunei with 230,000 (67 per cent of the national total). Significant minority Muslim communities can be

found in the Philippines (4 million or 5 per cent of the nation's population), Thailand (2.3 million or 4 per cent), Burma (1.7 million or 4 per cent) and Singapore (600,000 or 14 per cent). The remaining three Southeast Asian states – Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos – all have small Muslim minorities (less than 2.5 per cent). Overall, Southeast Asian Muslims constitute 18 per cent of the global Islamic community.[6]

Islam has been present in Southeast Asia for at least eleven centuries, though much about its spread remains obscure. Islam came largely via sea routes and established itself in maritime and riverine communities. From the early tenth century CE, the Buddhist empire of Srivijaya based in Sumatra sent emissaries with Muslim names to the Chinese imperial court. The first evidence of a sultanate in the region is the tombstone of al-Malik al-Saleh in Pasai, north Sumatra, the inscription on which may be read to give a CE date of 1279. Other inscriptions and travellers' accounts from various parts of coastal Southeast Asia over the next two centuries bear witness to the growing cultural and political penetration of Islam. The use of Arabic script and Islamic titles becomes more common as also does evidence of the introduction of Islamic law, early evidence of which is provided by a fragment of a legal edict inscribed on the Trengganu Stone, to be dated between 1303 and 1387 CE. Gravestones in Brunei, the Malay Peninsula, and in east and north central Java attest to the transition to Islamic culture. By the late fifteenth century, powerful Islamic states were established in various parts of the Malay-Indonesian world and there is also evidence of Islam's spread to the southern islands of the present-day Philippines.[7]

There is much debate among scholars as to the exact nature of this Islamisation process. Merchants undoubtedly played an important role, the major agency of religious change being the intense trading network of the Indian Ocean. They were accompanied by artisans and religious scholars – some of them Sufis – and fortune hunters. They included Arabs as well as a variety of ethnicities from West and South Asia, who were significant in the spread of Islam in the western regions of the archipelago. It is also likely that Chinese Muslims played a role, particularly in the southern Philippines, eastern Indonesia and Malaysia. Much of the process, at least from what local chronicles tell us, seems to have been 'top-down'. Sections of the elite converted to Islam and then began to 'Islamise' their societies. On the other hand, the organisation of port states into self-governing quarters according to ethnic origin left open the possibility of Islamisation from the 'bottom-up'. The fragmentary nature of the evidence prior to the sixteenth century makes it impossible to determine to what extent Islam had taken hold among the populace.

An important aspect to note is that the adoption of Islam was usually an interactive process in which indigenous Southeast Asians consciously adapted their practice of the faith to local circumstances. Rarely was Islam imposed through conquest or force of arms. Not surprisingly, this Islamisation process was uneven. In some areas, Muslims had highly blended nativistic forms of

Islamic practice, often retaining elements of Hindu, Buddhist or animist ritual and belief. In other areas, most commonly littoral, they were more rigorous in their observances of Islam. This differing level of 'Islamic-ness' created tensions within the Islamic community (*umma*), especially as the more accommodating in religious practice resisted pressure from the pious to become 'more Islamic'. Through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Islam attained a certain political and social stability. The colonial powers, which gradually extended their power across most of the region during this time, generally left Islamic rulers in place, while ensuring their subservience to the imperial master. They were not, however, insulated from the major currents of reform and revival that took place in the Muslim world from the late eighteenth century on. With the dawn of the twentieth century, this was to become more intense.

The process of Islamisation has accelerated rapidly in Southeast Asia since the 1970s, particularly in Malaysia and Indonesia. Evidence for this can be found in the growing popularity of Islamic attire and devotions, as well as increasing demand both for popular Islamic literature and works of Islamic learning. Greater numbers of women are wearing headdresses and loose-fitting gowns while more men don white skull caps and collar-less long white shirts (*baju koko*). Mosque attendance has risen sharply, as also has the number of Muslims strictly observing the fast and performing the special night prayer rituals of Ramadan. Production and sales of books and magazines on 'Islamic' subjects have burgeoned in recent years and Islamic programming on television and radio is increasingly popular. The varieties of Islamic practice and belief have also expanded. Sufi orders (*tarekat*) are attracting members in seemingly record numbers, and Shi'ism is gaining a small but committed following. Other Muslims have been drawn to more puritanical or radical groups which campaign for the comprehensive implementation of Islamic law or the establishment of an Islamic state. Yet others have taken up 'liberal' Islam and have become active in seeking new interpretations and applications of their faith.

A number of international and domestic factors appear to be driving this Islamisation process. First, rapid socio-economic change in recent decades led to a rise in religiosity, particularly among the new Muslim middle classes. Many of these Muslims came from rural backgrounds but had moved to large cities to gain higher education and pursue professional careers. While enjoying the material and status privileges of a high-consumption lifestyle, they also found many aspects of big-city living disorientating. They saw Islam as a source of moral guidance and spiritual enrichment and became more serious in the practice of their faith. Second, growing state sponsorship of Islamic predication and education assisted in popularising more scripturally based religious practices.

Previously, Muslims had gained much of their knowledge about their faith from their parents and local religious scholars and teachers, who often adhered to more folk-influenced versions of Islam. The growing emphasis on Islamic education in state schools and universities meant that young Muslims' notions of proper religious practice came to be shaped by the 'official' government-

endorsed guidelines that had been compiled by prominent Islamic scholars. The principles taught in the state curriculum often reflected a more rigorous approach to Islamic law than that present in many traditional village schools. Third, a number of external factors have had an impact on Muslim community thinking. These included the Iranian Revolution of 1979, which was welcomed by many Southeast Asian Muslims as evidence of Islam's ability to strike back against a secular regime with powerful Western support. The oil crisis of the early 1970s was another important factor. The crisis, which culminated in sharp oil price rises, generated great wealth for many Middle-Eastern states, a number of which embarked on generous funding of Islamic institutions and education in Southeast Asia. Growing numbers of Muslims gained scholarships to countries such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt or were able to study Middle-Eastern derived curricula in local schools funded by 'oil money'. Globalisation also played a role, allowing greater flows of information and people between the region and other parts of the Muslim world, especially the Middle East. This led to more rapid spread of Islamist ideas, particularly for middle-class Muslims who were in search of a 'purer', more 'authentic' version of Islam than that which, in their view, had been practised by their parents.

Malaysia

Islam has had a bigger impact on Malaysia's society and state than on that of any other Southeast Asian nation. The politically dominant ethnic Malay community is the key to understanding Islam's importance. Malays make up 55 per cent of the total population and they also comprise the overwhelming majority of the *umma*. Muslims, however, can be found in small numbers across most of Malaysia's other ethnic groups, from the Indians and Chinese to 'indigenous' tribal communities known as *orang asli* and minorities in Sarawak and Sabah. Despite this, the common perception is that the Malay community is coterminous with the *umma*, and, indeed, the constitution defines Malays as Muslim. There are two main Malay parties: the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) and Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (All Malaysian Islamic Party; PAS). Both parties serve as vehicles for promoting not just Malay interests but also Islam. UMNO has been the main pillar of Malaysia's governing multi-ethnic coalition since independence in 1957, the other significant members being the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC). All of the country's five prime ministers have been UMNO leaders and, *ipso facto*, Malay. PAS is the minority Malay party. It began as a breakaway group from UMNO in 1951 led by Islamic scholars and activists who believed that UMNO was not sufficiently Islamic in its outlook.[8] Except for a four-year stint (1973–1977) in the governing coalition Barisan Nasional (BN), PAS has spent most of its history as an opposition party and the main rival to UMNO for Malay votes.

Malays have traditionally had a close identification with Islam. There has been a centuries-old history of Islamic states, especially on the Malay Peninsula with its nine sultanates. During the colonial period, the influence of Islam as a political and legal force was limited. The British gradually pared away the political power of the sultans but were careful to retain their symbolic status as community and religious leaders. Accordingly, the British civil code was also given precedence over the shari'a.

From Malayan independence in 1957 (Malaya became the Federation of Malaysia in 1963), Islam was accorded a privileged position. The Constitution states that 'Islam is the religion of the Federation', though the religious freedom of all citizens is also guaranteed. Islam's special constitutional status led to an expectation among Muslims that the state would give preferment to Islam over other religions. The early prime ministers, Tunku Abdul Rahman and Tun Razak, commenced this process by providing generous sponsorship of mosque building and Islamic school construction. There was also funding for those taking the pilgrimage to Mecca and for Qur'an reciting competitions. Islam was also made a compulsory subject for Muslims in government educational institutions at all levels. These governments, however, were cautious about granting concessions to Muslims that would raise grievances among ethnic and religious minorities. They also remained essentially pro-Western in outlook.

Two events were to lead to a quickening in the pace of Islamisation: the 1969 ethnic disturbances; and the rise to power of Mahathir Mohammad in 1981. The ethnic riots broke out in Kuala Lumpur following the May 1969 elections in which support for the Malay-led ruling coalition dropped sharply. Angry Malays rioted, leading to the loss of some 200 lives and extensive damage to property. The extent of the violence shocked the government and UMNO in particular set about addressing the deepening Malay dissatisfaction which had been a major factor behind the riots. Soon after, the party embarked on an ambitious policy of addressing Malay economic and political grievances, effectively imposing a regime of 'positive discrimination' for Malays in a variety of sectors from education and business to the bureaucracy. The aim was to narrow the socio-economic disparity between Malays and the Chinese and Indian communities, and particularly to reduce the widespread poverty among rural Malays.[9] Increased sponsorship of Islamic education and institutions was one aspect of this revised policy.

More far-reaching changes came with Mahathir's ascension to the prime ministership in July 1981. Mahathir had built his political career on a 'Malays first' agenda and he assumed leadership of the government determined that Malays and Islam should have greater prominence. He sought to blend Islamisation with modernisation, creating a state that was both economically advanced and more self-consciously Islamic. As Osman Bakar wrote, Mahathir sought to 'transform the Malay mind and inculcate Islamic values in economic development'.[10] In what became known informally as his 'Islamisation Policy', he launched a series of initiatives designed to strengthen the position of Islam

in law, technology, education, the economy and culture. These included raising shari'a courts to the same level as civil courts and revising laws to ensure they conformed to the shari'a; establishing economic institutions such as the Islamic Bank and Islamic Economic Foundation; creating a *Dakwah* (Preaching) Foundation (YADIM) to promote and coordinate predication activities; requiring Muslim civil servants seeking promotion to demonstrate a good knowledge of Islam; instructing Malaysian state radio and television stations that only Islamic religious programmes may be broadcast; reorienting Malaysian foreign policy towards the Islamic world (and ASEAN) while taking a more combative stance towards the West; and developing Malaysian-based international Islamic educational centres such as the International Islamic University in Kuala Lumpur. Perhaps most controversially of all, Mahathir declared in September 2001 that Malaysia was an Islamic state, though there have been no legislative changes to enshrine this and the constitution has not been amended.[11]

But Islamisation initiatives were not restricted to the central government. The most widely reported instances of state (i.e. regional) government Islamic activism are from Kelantan, where PAS has been in power since 1990, and Trengganu, where the party controlled government from 1999 to 2004. In Kelantan, the government legislated *hudud*, punishments such as scourging and stoning prescribed in the Qur'an for specific crimes, and in Trengganu, *ta'azir*, a regime of 'deterrent' punishments, was enacted. The Federal government, however, halted the implementation of both laws.[12]

Though receiving less attention outside Malaysia, the Islamist agendas of UMNO-controlled state governments have been almost as zealous as their PAS counterparts. In the late 1980s, Selangor, Penang, Johor, Perak, Pahang and Malacca all announced tough measures against non-Muslims preaching to Malays. Pahang went so far as to decree whipping for anyone seeking to convert Muslims to another faith and also demanded the closure of Muslim-owned businesses for evening prayers. Selangor introduced flogging for Muslims caught drinking alcohol in public. Johor passed laws allowing gays, prostitutes and those engaging in pre-marital sex to be caned or jailed. Some states also have strict *khalwat* laws, under which members of the opposite sex meeting in a secluded place can be punished. A number of states also prohibit Christians from using certain words of Arabic derivation in translations of the Bible, including *Allah* (God), *rasul* (messenger) and *iman* (faith). On such issues, there is often little difference between the views of UMNO's Islamic activists and those in PAS. Media portrayals of PAS as the radical party and UMNO as more moderate are misleadingly reductive. PAS and UMNO encompass a broad range of views and interests and Islamist thinking is a major influence in both.[13]

The reasons for this Islamisation process have been much discussed among scholars of Malaysia. The most frequently raised factor is that of politics, particularly the pitched competition between UMNO and PAS for the 'Muslim vote'. According to this view, the two parties are locked in a bidding war for Malay support and have used Islam both to enhance their own legitimacy and to discredit their rivals. PAS has frequently attacked UMNO for not upholding

Islamic values and failing to defend the *umma*'s interests. Some of the party's leaders have labelled UMNO as 'secular', 'impious' and even 'infidel', and regularly attribute Malaysia's social and political ills to UMNO's neglect on shari'a issues. UMNO, in turn, ridicules PAS as a party of dangerous fanatics and hidebound traditionalists whose sectarian policies threaten not only the country's economic growth but also its fragile ethnic harmony.

The Islamic state issue provides a good example of how the Islamic discourse is ratcheted up as each party seeks to outflank the other. PAS has, for much of its history, made the creation of a Malaysian Islamic state a central part of its political agenda and the party's actions in Kelantan and Trengganu show that this is more than rhetoric. For many years, UMNO was defensive on this issue. Mahathir, however, sought to turn the tables on PAS with his 2001 announcement that Malaysia was now an Islamic state. He thereafter challenged PAS to spell out its position on the issue, no doubt hoping to create difficulties for the party within its largely secular opposition coalition, the Barisan Alternatif. PAS initially proposed a largely 'deconfessionalised' model, which emphasised rights and civic duties while downplaying Islamic law obligations. But in late 2003, the party leadership decided that such an approach was not only politically unwise but also insufficiently 'Islamic'. They then issued an emphatically Islamist blueprint for a Malaysian Islamic state, including extensive imposition of Islamic law and effective discrimination against non-Muslims.[14] This manoeuvring for advantage on Islamic issues has led to what Farish Noor calls a 'normalisation of Islamified discourse', in which it has become routine for Malays to conceptualise and discuss their political aspirations in narrowly Islamic terms rather than in pluralistic or secular terms. He further observed that the 'UMNO-PAS oppositional discourse increasingly determines the form and content of Malaysian politics'.[15]

Few political observers dispute the primacy of politics in this 'Islamisation race', but this is not the only important factor. Some of the socio-economic and globalisation elements referred to earlier have also had a powerful effect. Malaysia's Islamic community underwent probably the most dramatic social and economic change of any in Southeast Asia from the mid-1970s. Malaysia enjoyed rapid economic growth from this period and the government's various policies for accelerated Malay advancement ensured a sharp rise in the size of the Muslim middle classes. These Malays were much better educated and worldlier than their forebears, but also had different demands of their faith as they sought to adapt to the pressures of modern urban living and exposure to globalising Western cultural influences. One prominent reaction was an inclination towards more literal applications of Islam which spelled out in categorical terms appropriate behaviour for Muslims. Thus, as the socio-economic role of Malays changed, so did their expression of Islam.

One specific element of globalisation warrants special comment: this was the spread of 'neo-revivalist' thought from the Middle East and South Asia into Malaysian Islamic thinking.[16] This was particularly true of the thinking of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Jama'at-i Islami in Pakistan. The social

activism of both groups and their emphasis on personal piety and *dakwah* inspired young Muslims from the early 1970s. In campuses across Malaysia, young intellectuals put into practice the new ideas gained from the Brotherhood and Jama'ati, forming discussion groups and *dakwah* organisations aimed at deepening the commitment to Islam of Malays. For this reason, the 1970s is often referred to as the '*dakwah* decade'. Some of these neo-revivalist ideals were brought back to Malaysia by students who had studied in the Middle East but rapid improvements in communications meant that information about new ideas elsewhere in the Islamic world spread quickly to Malaysia.

The growing number of cultural exchanges between Malaysia and other Islamic countries also improved access to these concepts. The most prominent of the many new *dakwah* organisations was ABIM (Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia: Malaysian Muslim Youth Movement). This would play a significant role in the hardening attitudes of PAS and UMNO on Islamic issues in the 1980s. Mahathir, keen to improve his own credentials and appeal to the burgeoning Muslim youth vote, began this by recruiting to UMNO the charismatic ABIM leader, Anwar Ibrahim, and a number of other key ABIM figures.[17] The ABIM recruits helped to sharpen UMNO's Islamic agenda, in particular, laying much greater emphasis on legalist policies such as legislating against 'immoral' behaviour and apostasy. A similar process of ABIM recruitment was taking place within PAS, though on a larger scale than with UMNO. The end result was a new Islamising vigour in both parties.[18]

In this regard, Islamisation can be seen as not just political, but rather as a process which has its roots in deeper social, economic and cultural developments. Malaysian Muslims were increasingly receptive to the appeals of political Islam, but also demanded greater Islamic content from their politicians. Hence, this was a two-way process, a dialectic, in which politicians perceived growing voter attraction towards Islamic issues and sought to meet this. But the granting of concessions to Islam served to intensify Islamic sentiment within the community, thus creating a cycle in which politics spurs socio-religious demands which in turn trigger new 'Islamic' expectations of politicians. Recent studies of Malaysia's Islamic justice system would appear to confirm this multi-causal explanation of Islamisation. On the one hand, governments have significantly expanded the authority of religious courts and broadened the array of 'Islamic' statutes on which the shari'a courts can adjudicate. On the other hand, many judges have responded to this not just as an increase in their judicial power, but also as part of a process whereby they themselves deepen their knowledge of Islam as a faith and become better Muslims. In other words, Islamising the legal system is not just about black letter law and professional judicial standards, it is also about personal religious piety. To focus only on the political and legal dimension is to miss the equally important attitudinal changes which are underway.[19]

The effects of Islamisation on contemporary Malaysian politics and society have been far-reaching. This is apparent in the growing centrality of Islamic symbols and language in political discourse, as well as in the more extensive

application of Islamic law. The state requires Muslims to learn more about their faith than in the past and they are also expected to observe certain minimum standards of outward piety. Moreover, the law is less tolerant of 'un-Islamic' behaviour. One consequence has been a narrowing of the space for open debate on Islamic issues. Malaysia does have Islamic groups engaged in civil society activities, particularly the promotion of liberal Islamic reform agendas such as gender rights, democratisation and religious tolerance. But overall, their views have only limited reach in the mainstream political discourse and they are also subject to intimidation from both government and Islamist groups.

Indonesia

Islamisation in Indonesia presents an interesting contrast to Malaysia. Although the percentage of the population claiming to be Muslim is far higher in Indonesia than Malaysia (88 per cent compared to 55 per cent) in a much greater population, Islam has had less influence on politics and society in the former than in the latter. Political Islam in Indonesia, in particular, has a history crowded with failure. It is possible to divide this history into three broad periods. Two of these – from 1945 to 1959 and from 1998 till the present – were 'democratic' periods characterised by relatively open competition between parties, and free and fair elections. The intervening period, from 1959 to 1998, was one of authoritarian rule, first under Sukarno's Guided Democracy (1959–1966) and then under Soeharto's New Order (1966–1998). Both these regimes imposed tight restrictions on political Islam. Thus, Islamic parties have only been able to function freely for 20 of the 59 years since independence. It is instructive to look at how political Islam responded to these alternating periods of democracy and authoritarianism.

In the lead up to Indonesian independence, most Islamic leaders had three key hopes for political Islam: (1) that Indonesia would be an Islamic state, or at least give special constitutional recognition to the place of Islam; (2) that all Muslims would be united in a single political party, in keeping with the principle of Islamic brotherhood (*ukhuwah Islamiyah*); and (3) that this Islamic party would win a large majority when elections were held, reflecting the fact that most voters were Muslim, and would thus dominate Indonesian politics. In short, Islam would be the most powerful single influence in shaping the state and politics. Within a decade, all of these hopes had been dashed.

The aspiration for an Islamic state was one of the early casualties of the often bitter negotiations between secular nationalists and Islamic leaders over the content of the constitution. Prior to the declaration of independence on 17 August 1945, Islamic leaders had agreed to accept the religiously neutral Pancasila[20] as the basis of the state, on condition that a text known as the Jakarta Charter be inserted into the constitution. The Charter was a compromise agreement between those favouring an Islamic state and those who insisted on a secular state. It stipulated that there was an 'obligation for Muslims to carry out Islamic law'. The day after the

proclamation of independence, nationalists prevailed upon Islamic representatives to omit the Charter from the constitution as non-Muslim communities were threatening to repudiate the new nation if it was seen to privilege Islam. Islamic politicians, though bitter, consoled themselves with the prospect that an Islamic party would be the clear winner at future elections and would then be able to use its majority to introduce the shari'a into the constitution and statutes.[21]

The aim of a politically united Islam also proved difficult to achieve. In late 1945, all major Islamic groups agreed to form a single party, Masyumi. Within two years, however, the party lost one of its smaller founding organisations and in 1952, its largest member, the traditionalist Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), left Masyumi in protest at perceived marginalisation.[22] NU went on to become Masyumi's main competitor for Muslim votes. Furthermore, the expectation of Muslim electoral superiority was shown to be unfounded. At Indonesia's first general elections in 1955, Islamic parties gained 43.9 per cent of the vote, well short of the hoped-for majority. Masyumi and NU emerged as Indonesia's second and third largest parties with 20.9 per cent and 18.4 per cent respectively of the national vote (the secular Indonesian Nationalist Party topped the election with 22 per cent). Islamic parties did serve in the coalition governments of the 1950s and succeeded in influencing some policy aspects, but overall, their achievements were far more modest than they had hoped.

Worse was to follow during Guided Democracy and the New Order. Both Sukarno and Soeharto were wary of the power of Islam as a source of opposition and set about imposing controls on Muslim organisations. These included limiting the number of Islamic parties, demanding conformity with the official regime ideology, restricting the use of Islamic symbols and language, and coopting Muslim leaders and organisations for the purposes of regime legitimation. Sukarno banned Masyumi in 1960 and permitted only NU and two minor Islamic parties to continue political activities. NU and the main modernist organisation, Muhammadiyah, were also obliged to proffer fulsome support to Sukarno.[23]

Soeharto proved even more repressive towards political Islam, particularly in the first two decades of his presidency. He refused to allow Masyumi's reformation but eventually permitted a modernist party called Parmusi to be established on condition that no senior Masyumi leaders held executive positions. At the next election, in 1971, Parmusi's vote was just 5.4 per cent. The total Islamic party vote in that year was 27.1 per cent; NU accounted for most of this with 18.7 per cent of the national vote.[24] In 1973, the New Order forced all four Islamic parties to amalgamate to form Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (United Development Party; PPP). Rivalries between the parties and constant regime intervention made PPP an unstable entity, though it remained the second largest party to the New Order's electoral vehicle Golkar for the rest of Soeharto's rule, gaining between 16 per cent and 29 per cent of the vote. The heaviest blow to political Islam came in the mid-1980s, when the regime obliged all parties and socio-religious organisations to accept

Pancasila as their sole ideological basis. This was strongly resisted by Islamic groups but most of them eventually relented under threat of dissolution by the New Order. In addition to inflicting successive defeats on political Islam, the regime also allowed few devout Muslims into strategic positions within the civilian or military elite.[25] Thus, by the mid-1980s, the Islamic community saw itself as marginalised and stigmatised. As one former Masyumi leader famously commented, Muslims were treated like 'cats with ringworm'.[26]

From the late 1980s, the New Order's attitude towards Islam began to change. The regime made a number of legislative concessions to Islam, including expanding the authority of the shari'a courts, lifting a ban on girls' headdresses in state schools, introducing state coordination of alms collection and distribution, and abolishing the state lottery. It also began appointing larger numbers of devout Muslims to senior positions and gave generous sponsorship to Islamic institutions and initiatives. These included the founding of a Muslim Intellectuals' Association (Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim (se) Indonesia; IMCI) and the establishment of an Islamic bank (Bank Muamalat Indonesia) and insurance agency. Soeharto's own behaviour suggested a greater personal commitment to Islam than he had shown in the past. He took the *hajj* pilgrimage to Mecca and became a high-profile guest at major Islamic celebrations.[27] Within the space of a few years, Islam had gone from being an outcast and regime victim to having favoured status. Whereas being a committed Muslim was once a hindrance to one's career, now it was an asset.

Moreover, the growing Islamisation of society manifested itself in a variety of ways. The Arabic salutation *al-salam alaikum* (peace be with you) became commonly heard in both public and private settings, Islamic dress and images became a popular idiom in advertising, the public flocked to exhibitions of Arabic calligraphy, and record numbers of Muslims were taking the pilgrimage. Seasoned observers of Indonesia remarked that the country now 'felt' more Islamic than in the past. The depth of this Islamisation has been the subject of debate. One Muhammadiyah leader wryly observed that the rise in overt piety had not reduced the number of Muslims appearing in court on corruption charges.[28] Also, despite the increased powers for religious courts and the passage of a number of 'Islam-based' laws, the impact on ordinary Muslims was not dramatic.[29]

The New Order's 'Islamic turn' was the product of several interlinked factors. The Muslim middle classes had grown rapidly in size and influence on the back of Indonesia's post-1970s economic boom. The increasingly Islamic identification of this section of society made it risky for the regime to continue with its discriminatory policies towards devout Muslims, particularly when they had the educational and professional backgrounds that the New Order had promoted as part of its developmentalist agenda for Indonesia. Moreover, mounting tensions between Soeharto and the military, which had previously been the mainstay of his regime, drove the president to cultivate new sources of support. The Islamic community, especially middle-class Muslims, were well disposed to his overtures. After many years on the

periphery of politics, they welcomed the opportunity to gain access to senior government positions and the lucrative patronage networks connected to the regime. Despite his 'embracing' of Islam from the late 1980s, Soeharto was careful to maintain tight control over Islamic groups and to limit the possibility of them undermining his rule. In effect, Muslims could only benefit from the New Order's largesse if they offered their loyalty in return.

The downfall of Soeharto in May 1998 ushered in a new period of political freedom. Most of the New Order restrictions on parties, the media and free speech were lifted and the first genuinely democratic elections in 44 years were held in June 1999. The responses of political Islam and the *umma* to these developments had two remarkable features. The first was an unprecedented fragmentation within Islamic politics. Of the 48 parties which contested the elections, 10 had Islam as their ideological basis. Another 11 could be classed as de facto Islamic parties. Though based on Pancasila rather than Islam, these parties relied heavily on Islamic symbols for attracting support and had leaders with strong Islamic credentials and well-established roots in the *umma*. These 21 parties gained 37.9 per cent of the vote, 6 per cent less than the total Islamic party vote in 1955.

This proliferation of parties revealed a vastly more complex map of Islamic political affiliation than was the case in 1955. At that time, the two largest streams within Islam – traditionalism and modernism – were divided largely along NU and Masyumi lines respectively. But of the top seven parties in 1999, traditionalists voted in substantial numbers for at least four and the Muhammadiyah vote was split between five. The second feature was the rise of what might best be referred to as 'Islamic pluralism'. An examination of the election results suggests that proportionally far fewer Muslims were attracted to 'Islamism' than was the case in the 1950s. Available evidence suggests that at the 1955 election, most committed Muslims voted for one of the six Islamic parties; all of those parties were formally based on Islam and supported constitutional recognition of the shari'a (i.e. the Jakarta Charter). In 1999, the ten parties based on Islam gained only 15.9 per cent of the vote, compared to 22.1 per cent for eleven 'pluralist' Pancasila-based Islamic parties. Moreover, an analysis of which parties performed well in known 'Islamic areas' revealed that a significant minority of Muslims voted for 'secular' parties – that is, parties such as Golkar and the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) – which did not make religion an important part of their platform or campaigning.[30]

The 2004 general elections saw a similar pattern of Muslim electoral behaviour. The total vote for the seven 'Islamic' parties was 38.3 per cent, a slight increase on 1999. The two 'pluralist' Islamic parties gained 17 per cent and the Islam-based parties garnered 21.3 per cent.[31] Importantly, most of the Islamist parties downplayed their specifically Islamic agendas during the election and campaigned largely on non-religious issues such as anti-corruption and political reform. The pluralist trend is also evident in the repeated rejection of the Jakarta Charter in the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) sessions from 2001 to 2003 that dealt with constitutional amendments.

Despite the seeming popularity of Islamic pluralism, Islamists gained some solace from a number of developments. The first was the implementation of shari'a at the regional level in various parts of Indonesia. Mostly, this has been done informally by district heads of government working together with local Muslim groups to enforce compliance with particular 'shari'a codes' such as the wearing of 'Islamic garb' (usually meaning headdresses for women) and the shutting down of nightclubs and gambling dens. As the central government retains control of religious affairs, local governments can only carry out such programmes 'unofficially'. Several dozen districts in Java, Sumatra and Sulawesi have sought to apply the shari'a in this way, but have usually done so fitfully. The exception to this is the north Sumatran province of Aceh, where the central government allowed comprehensive implementation of Islamic law as part of a package of concessions to undercut separatist sentiment.

The second source of optimism for Islamists has been the parliament's willingness to pass controversial legislation which 'upholds Muslims' rights'. The most hotly debated of these was the 2003 National Education Law which obliged schools to provide religious education teachers who were of the same faith as the students (in effect, ensuring that Christian and Catholic schools had to employ Muslim staff for teaching Islamic studies to Muslim students). Despite strong opposition from non-Muslims, both Islamist and pluralist Islamic parties voted for the bill.[32] Other bills pending include a revised criminal law code which incorporates significant elements of the shari'a.

One other aspect of contemporary Islam in Indonesia which deserves special mention is that of 'Cultural Islam'. This is a term used to discuss a broad range of groups and activities which were generally liberal in character and concerned with advancing Islam intellectually, culturally and spiritually, rather than through party politics and elections. Those involved in this 'movement' were often critical of existing Islamic paradigms and sought to revitalise Islam through a process of rigorous re-interpretation of scripture. Many were convinced that Islam had great transformative potential and could provide the basis for thorough-going social and political reform. NGOs and discussion groups sprang up from the early 1970s to foster and popularise new Islamic thinking. These groups and organisations had wide-ranging agendas from gender equality, inter-faith dialogue, democratisation and community development to 'progressive' exegesis and the construction of 'leftist' Islamic thought. Parts of these agendas were also taken up by mainstream Islamic organisations, most notably NU. Cultural Islam strengthened Muslim civil society in Indonesia and helped to deepen pluralist thinking within the *umma*.

Comparing Islamisations

As is apparent from the foregoing discussion, the dynamics of political Islam and the Islamisation process in Malaysia and Indonesia have some notable differences. In Indonesia, Islamisation has taken on broader and generally less

legalistic forms. There is a thriving liberal Islam movement and a continuing emphasis on 'deconfessionalised' or pluralist political discourse. Islamisation has also not led to a demonstrable rise in Islamism. Indeed, while Islamic religiosity is more intense and widespread now than at any time in the nation's history, Islamist inclinations, certainly as can be measured politically, have receded over the past 40 years. Most Indonesian Muslims appear not to want the state to have extensive powers of shari'a enforcement and many eschew Islamic sectarianism in politics.

In Malaysia, by contrast, Islamisation has resulted in a more narrow and exclusivist manifestation of the faith. Islamist sentiment is rising, leading to the introduction of a much wider array of shari'a-based statutes than in Indonesia. The application of these laws by state religious institutions and the judiciary is also more rigorous. Furthermore, Islamist language suffuses Malaysian political discourse, especially that of Malay politicians. Most Muslim politicians draw heavily on Islamic concepts and language in promoting their cause. This is not to say that Islamisation has penetrated more deeply into Malaysian society than into Indonesia's, but rather that the Islamisation process has been manifested in different ways. In Malaysia, Islamisation has flowed through both the private and public spheres; in Indonesia, many Muslims regard faith as primarily a personal matter and want curbs on the Islamisation of the public sphere.

There are several probable reasons for this. To begin with, Indonesia's Islamic community is far more diverse ethnically, culturally, geographically and doctrinally than Malaysia's. These cleavages flow through to politics, making it difficult to bring together Islam's disparate streams into a coherent, stable and united force. Indeed, political Islam in Indonesia has been divided for much of its history and Islamic parties have often found it easier to coalesce with non-Muslim parties than with each other. This disunity greatly reduced the political power of Islam. Rarely were Islamic groups able to command a majority in parliament to pass shari'a-based legislation or push through constitutional amendments. While Malaysia's largely Malay *umma* is by no means monolithic, it does have greater homogeneity than Indonesia's Islamic community. This meant that UMNO has been a more united and effective political force than any of its Islamic counterparts in Indonesia.

Another difference is that Indonesia has experienced little of the Islamic 'bidding war' which has occurred in Malaysia between UMNO and PAS. This is in part due to the coalitions between Muslim and non-Muslim parties which were a feature of both the 1950s and the post-Soeharto era. In effect, these religiously and ideologically mixed alliances constrained Islamic parties in the types of rhetoric and policies that they pursued. While UMNO has also been in long-term multi-ethnic and multi-religious alliances, its dominance of those coalitions has allowed it greater freedom of rhetoric and action.

Another important factor was the anti-Islamist authoritarianism of both the Sukarno and Soeharto regimes. For almost 40 years, key elements of an Islamist agenda such as advocacy of an Islamic state and the comprehensive

implementation of shari'a were suppressed, often emphatically so. While Malaysia has variously been characterised as a 'semi-democracy' or a 'repressive democracy', it has seldom suffered the heavy-handed authoritarianism of Guided Democracy or the New Order. Moreover, successive UMNO-led governments have cultivated Islam politically, rather than seeking to undermine it as Sukarno and Soeharto did. The New Order's stifling of political Islam also helped to spur the Cultural Islam movement, as young intellectuals and activists sought new ways to express and apply their faith that would not invite the wrath of the regime.

So, to return to the opening questions about the political consequences of Islamisation, the Malaysian and Indonesian cases suggest that religiosity does not, of itself, necessarily lead to more overtly Islamic politics. Other factors, such as the complexity of the *umma,* the nature of the political system and the dynamics between Islamic parties, have a powerful influence in determining how greater personal religious commitment is expressed politically.

Notes

1 Islamisation can have two meanings: (1) the conversion of non-Muslims to Islam; and (2) the intensification of Islamic belief and practice among those who are already Muslim. In a Southeast Asian context, the first meaning is largely historical; contemporary census figures suggest the conversion rate to Islam from other religions is very low. Thus, in this discussion, Islamisation is taken as referring to growing emphasis on pietism among the region's Muslims.

2 A good example of this genre is Michael Vatikiotis's 'The Struggle for Islam' (Vatikiotis, 2003), pp. 54–58, dealing with the dangers of 'creeping Islamisation' in Indonesia and Malaysia. Other writings in this vein include Daniel Sneider, 'Radical vs. moderate Islam – in Indonesia a war rages' (Sneider, 2003), and Zachary Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia: Crucible of Terror* (Abuza, 2003).

3 'Deconfessionalisation' is a term of Dutch origin which has often been used in an Indonesian context to describe the avoidance of overtly religious or sectarian language. In effect, a people are enjoined not to use religion to arouse their co-religionists for a sectarian purpose or exclude those from other faiths from the public discourse.

4 The other large religious communities of Southeast Asia are the Buddhists (171 million or 36 per cent) and Christians (101 million or 21 per cent).

5 After Indonesia, the next largest Islamic communities are those of Pakistan (140 million), India (123 million), Bangladesh (112 million) and Turkey (65 million).

6 All figures are based on data from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica Book of the Year*, 2003; and Suryadinata, Arifin and Ananta (2003), pp. 103–112.

7 Ricklefs (2001), p.4.

8 Funston (2001), pp. 160–202.

9 This policy was known as the New Economic Policy (NEP). For accounts of this see Crouch (1996), pp. 24–26; and Andaya and Andaya (1982), pp. 280–89.

10 Bakar (2003), pp. 127–49.

11 For a detailed analysis of the Islamic state issue, see Martinez (2001), pp. 474–503.

12 Unlike for *hudud,* the Qur'an does not set out specific punishments under *ta'azir.*

13 Mutalib (1983), pp. x–xi and 30–32; and Martinez (2001), pp. 481–82.

14 For a good account of PAS's recent responses on this issue, see Tong (2003).

15 Noor (2003).

16 Neo-revivalism was an offshoot of the Egypt-based Islamic reform movement led by Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida. Its hallmarks were a rejection of Western culture and

philosophy, a reassertion of an emphasis on individual piety, and social action as the most effective way of Islamising the community and state.

17 Anwar Ibrahim rose to the deputy prime ministership before falling out with Mahathir in the late 1990s. He was later charged with, among other things, sodomy, and subsequently jailed. Anwar vehemently denied the charges and claimed he had been framed by a vengeful Mahathir.

18 There are several good studies of this process. See Muzaffar (1987); Anwar (1987); Funston (1981); and Jomo and Cheek (1992), pp. 79–132. 'ABIM-isation' was not the sole factor in this renewed emphasis on Islamism; traditional religious scholars and activists in UMNO also helped to drive this process.

19 For an interesting study of Malaysia's contemporary shari'a law system, see Peletz (2002). I am also grateful to Kikue Hamayotsu for sharing some of the findings from her PhD research into Malaysian Islamisation and state institutions.

20 Pancasila (literally 'five principles') comprises: belief in one God; humanitarianism; nationalism; democracy; and social justice.

21 Boland (1982), pp. 23–39.

22 In Indonesian Islam, the most historically important cleavage has been between 'traditionalists' and 'modernists' (sometimes also called 'reformists'). Traditionalists adhere strictly to one of the four Sunni law schools (almost invariably the Syafi'i school) and are also inclined to be tolerant of rites and practices of a non-Islamic origin. Modernists tend to reject non-Islamic practices and in matters of law prefer to base their interpretation more directly on the Qur'an and Sunnah rather than the classical law schools. Nahdlatul Ulama is the largest of the traditionalist organisations and Muhammadiyah is the biggest modernist organisation.

23 Muhammadiyah bestowed on Sukarno the rare honour of a Bintang Muhammadiyah (Muhammadiyah Star) and NU politicians led the move to grant Sukarno the presidency for life in 1963.

24 Golkar gained almost 63 per cent of the vote. In the six elections of the New Order, its vote never fell below 61 per cent.

25 For an overview of this period, see Fealy (2003), pp. 150–68.

26 Quoted in McVey (1983), p. 199.

27 Effendy (1998), pp. 269–310.

28 Syafii Maarif, the then deputy chair of Muhammadiyah (now chair), during a television interview, December 1994.

29 For a good study of the religious courts, see Cammack (1997).

30 Fealy (2001), pp. 119–36.

31 The 4.4 per cent rise in the vote for Islam-based parties was due almost entirely to the strong performance of the Justice and Prosperity Party (PKS). Despite its Islamist inclinations, PKS campaigned primarily on 'secular' anti-corruption and social justice issues, and there is considerable evidence suggesting that the five-fold increase in its vote was due to the appeal of its non-Islamic agenda.

32 See, for example, '10,000 rally for revamp of religious teaching in Indonesia', *The Straits Times*, 11 June 2003; and 'Undung-Undang Sisdiknas perlu disosialisasikan' (The National Education Laws need socialisation), *Kompas*, 13 June 2003.

References

'10,000 rally for revamp of religious teaching in Indonesia', *The Straits Times*, 11 June 2003.

'Undung-Undang Sisdiknas perlu disosialisasikan' (The National Education Laws need socialisation), *Kompas,* 13 June 2003.

Abuza, Z. (2003) *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia: Crucible of Terror*, Boulder: Lynne Reinner.

Andaya, B. W. and Andaya, L. Y. (1982) *A History of Malaysia,* London: Macmillan.

Anwar, Z. (1987) *Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia: Dakwah Among the Students*, Petaling Jaya: Pelanduk Publications.

Bakar, O. (2003) 'Islam and Political Legitimacy in Malaysia', in Akbarzadeh, S. and Saeed, A. (eds) *Islam and Political Legitimacy*, London: RoutledgeCurzon, pp. 127–49.

Boland, B. J. (1982) *The Struggle of Islam in Modern Indonesia*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

Cammack, M. (1997) 'Indonesia's 1989 Religious Judicature Act: Islamization of Indonesia or Indonesianization of Islam?', *Indonesia*, no. 63, pp. 143–68.

Crouch, H. (1996) *Government and Society in Malaysia*, St Leonards: Allen and Unwin.

Effendy, B. (1998) *Islam dan Negara: Transformasi Pemikiran dan Praktik Politik Islam di Indonesia* (Islam and the State: The Transformation of the Thought and Practice of Islamic Politics in Indonesia), Jakarta: Paramadina.

Encyclopaedia Britannica Book of the Year (2003), London: Encyclopaedia Britannica.

Fealy, G. (2003) 'Divided Majority: The Limits of Political Islam in Indonesia', in Akbarzadeh, S. and Saeed, A. (eds) *Islam and Political Legitimacy*, London: RoutledgeCurzon, pp. 150–68.

Fealy, G. (2001) 'Islamic Politics: A Rising or Declining Force?' in Kingsbury, D. and Budiman, A. (eds) *Indonesia: The Uncertain Transition*, Adelaide: Crawford House, pp. 119–36.

Funston, J. (2001) 'Malaysia: State Development Challenged', in John Funston (ed.), *Government and Politics in Southeast Asia*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, pp. 160–202.

Funston, J. (1981) 'Malaysia', in Ayoob, M. (ed.) *The Politics of Islamic Reassertion*, London: Croom Helm.

Jomo, K. S. and Cheek, A. S. (1992) 'Malaysia's Islamic Movements', in Kahn, J. S. and Loh Kok Wah, F. (eds) *Fragmented Vision: Culture and Politics in Contemporary Malaysia*, St Leonards, Sydney: Allen & Unwin, pp. 79–132.

Martinez, P. A. (2001) 'The Islamic State or the State of Islam in Malaysia', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol. 23, no. 3, pp. 474–503.

McVey, R. (1983) 'Faith as the Outsider: Islam in Indonesian Politics', in Piscatori, J. (ed.) *Islam in the Political Process*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mutalib, H. (1983) *Islam in Malaysia: From Revivalism to Islamic State*, Singapore: Singapore University Press.

Muzaffar, C. (1987) *Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia*, Petaling Jaya: Fajar Bakti.

Noor, F. (2003) 'Mapping out the Political Topography of Political Islam in Malaysia: Actors, Agents and Currents of Thought and Ideas', paper delivered at the 10th CSCAP General Conference in Jakarta, December.

Peletz, M. G. (2002) *Islamic Modern: Religious Courts and Cultural Politics in Malaysia*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Ricklefs, M. C. (2001) *A History of Modern Indonesia Since c.1300*, 3rd edn, London: Palgrave.

Sneider, D. (2003) 'Radical vs. moderate Islam – in Indonesia a war rages', *The Mercury News*, 4 December.

Suryadinata, L., Arifin, E. N. and Ananta, A. (eds) (2003) *Indonesia's Population: Ethnicity and Religion in a Changing Political Landscape*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Tong, L. C. (2003) 'PAS' Islamic State: A Tale of Two Versions', *Malaysiakini*, 3 & 4 December.

Vatikiotis, M. (2003) 'The Struggle for Islam', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 11 December pp. 54–58.

9   Between rhetoric and reality: Islam and politics in the Arab world

Ahmad Shboul

The heart's desire remains: that the Islamic movement will be less narrow-minded, and the authoritarian rulers less selfish; and that both will have more openness towards, and deeper understanding of, their societies.[1]

A democratic secular system of government is less evil than a despotic system of government that claims to be Muslim.[2]

Introduction

Writing in 1988, Saad Eddine Ibrahim saw 'revolutionary Islam … in the Arab World, actually [as] a functional complement to Arab nationalism of a generation ago' and as 'the contemporary equivalent of anti-colonial patriotism of two generations earlier'.[3] Empirical studies on the Egyptian Islamists indicate that they have come mostly from lower-middle-class families, mostly urban, have a modern education and are high academic achievers. Similar studies on Syria and Jordan reveal similar profiles.

Arab social scientists, with their hand on the pulse of their societies, have not found it an accident that 'these angry rebellious groups should take up the banner of Islam'. Ibrahim and others have argued that the phenomenon of the rebellious Islamic awakening has given the disenchanted and angry youth a kind of cultural legitimacy. Islam is used as a cultural and political shield against the accusations of 'communism' or 'imported foreign ideologies', which the autocratic rulers were in the habit of throwing at opposition movements, and as a sword to be raised against those in political authority and against the Great Powers that support them.

The questions driving this chapter include: how is it that a cultural tradition, which has its own well-established tradition of humanism from the ninth and tenth centuries of the Christian era, should subsequently have become identified, particularly in recent times, with staunch hostility to rationalist, scientific and secular attitudes? Is there an Arab 'secular current' that is strong and confident enough to attempt to define a political ethic independent of religious convictions (without denying or ridiculing such convictions)? Is it possible to expect any workable political consensus in any

of the Arab states unless such a state adopts full-fledged representative governance, with equality and respect for the civil and human rights of all its citizens? Naturally, due respect to religious beliefs and practices is an integral part of such rights. How has the rhetoric of 'applying the shari'a', a recruiting slogan of the Islamists, come to replace the reality of attempts in modernising jurisprudence?

Perspectives on Islam and politics

The increasing impact of religion on many contemporary societies, and particularly of religious extremism on politics, is hardly unique to the Arab world, or Islamic countries. As Eric Hobsbawm observes, 'Fundamentalist religion as a major force for successful mass mobilisation belongs to the last decades of the twentieth century'.[4] Paul N. Siegel, while asking: 'What accounts for the 'resurgence' of Islam?' also asks: 'What accounts for the evangelical and fundamentalist Religious Right in the United States? Why have liberal American-Jewish supporters of Israel, who have called for continued separation between Church and state in the United States, failed to call for such a separation in Israel?'[5]

Hobsbawm's and Siegel's observations highlight the need to examine religious extremism in a comparative approach.[6] This is instructive because it shows us not only contrasts, but also similarities across different traditions. What may seem 'Islamic' at first sight can well have parallels outside the Islamic context.

But complexities are not always discerned. Thus Fernandez-Armesto after noting the role of Christianity in the contemporary politics of the United States moves to 'Islam and politics', arguing that Islam 'is perhaps harder to fillet out of politics'. He may be right in describing Islam as 'a political religion', but this fact cannot be explained simply by arguing that '[Islam's] name implies a way of life as well as a system of faith', or that 'in Islamic usage, civil society and the congregation of the faithful are conterminous'.[7]

The role of Islam in politics cannot be explained by philology alone. The word *umma* in Arabic is used to denote 'nation' in the secular sense as well as a religious 'community'. Arabs use *umma* to refer to the Arab nation, where Muslims and Christians (for example in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria) and Muslims and Jews (for example in Morocco) have lived together for centuries in a multi-faith society. Again, the Arabic word *sha'b*, meaning 'people' of a country, or in a broader sense 'the Arab people' (*al-sha'b al-'Arabi*) is also used among Christian Arabs to denote the 'religious congregation'. Following Fernandez-Armesto's argument to its logical conclusion, one could equally extend it to other religious traditions, for every religion claims to be a way of life for its followers.

In explaining 'the revival of Islam', Fernand Braudel upholds the view that Islamic civilisation 'has relapsed into that inferno or purgatory of living humanity we euphemistically call the Third World. Relapsed, because it had

previously enjoyed what was undoubtedly a better relative position'.[8] The political scientist and sometime adviser to the US Department of State, Francis Fukuyama, opines that 'the current revival of Islamic fundamentalism can be seen as a response to the failure of Muslim societies generally to maintain their dignity vis-à-vis the non-Muslim West'.[9] But is it as simple as this kind of psychological explanation?

Diversity within Islamism

Diversity across and within Islamist groups is not adequately discerned in the dominant debates. But it should be kept in mind if we are to appreciate the complexities of the role of the 'Islamic factor' in politics in the Arab world, and indeed in the wider Islamic world and beyond.[10] In the Arab world, this diversity applies to what has been called, the 'Islamic revival', or 'Islamic awakening' (*al-sahwa al-Islamiyya*). It is highlighted by both Muslim critics and supporters of such *sahwa*.[11] Contemporary Islamic movements, while appealing to the same foundation texts, the same imagined community and idealised history, do not necessarily share the same views and interpretations of them. This is true even of such a crucial question as 'religion and politics'. Nor do they all communicate, present themselves or act in the same way. Indeed, while recent extremist splinter groups, particularly in Egypt since the 1970s, could be traced back to the Muslim Brethren, some such groups have moved away from the original principles of the mainstream to the extent that they are disowned even by the leadership of the Brethren. Another point to remember is that Islamist leaders or groups, in response to certain circumstances, may undergo transformation in their views, attitudes, rhetoric and political action.

Moreover, in the ever-growing literature on the subject of Islam in our contemporary world, the expressions 'radicalism', 'Islamic revival' and 'political Islam' have been variously used. 'Islamists' is also used to distinguish activists from Muslims in general. The Arabic equivalent for 'fundamentalism', *usuliyya*, is used, not only by Arab critics and opponents of Islamist groups, but also by their supporters. The 'Islamic current' (*al-tayyar al-Islami*), the 'Islamic movement' (*al-Haraka al-Islamiyya*), and the 'Islamic group' (*al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya*) are also frequently used.[12] Traditionalist Muslim leaders (including ruling elites, politicians, and clerics) as well as certain Islamist activists often describe themselves as, or do not mind being dubbed, *salafis*. The latter is a term essentially denoting an outlook of reverence for, and a claim to emulate, the early pious Muslims who lived in the shadow of the Prophet's example. Such appellations are meant to denote a phenomenon reflecting a wide range of movements, groups and attitudes, all claiming, or assumed to be, based on 'authentic' Islamic teachings.

The Islamic revival and the more recent Islamist movements have to do with the internal political dynamics of Arab societies. The 'clash of civilisations' concept as articulated by Samuel Huntington (inspired by Bernard

Lewis), perceives 'Islam' as the candidate for enemy of the West par excellence, after the demise of the Soviet bloc.[13] It is clear that in his purported geopolitical analysis of 'the remaking of World Order', Huntington is shifting the focus on the role of religion as a major factor in world affairs, thereby unwittingly accepting a fundamentalist perspective.

Islam in Arab political culture

That Islam has a unique historical relationship with the Arabic language and Arab culture is often underestimated by modern observers, or is only highlighted to claim a kind of Arab cultural imperialism in relation to other Muslim peoples.[14] While the Arabs should not be taken for the whole of Islam nor their importance overstated, the Arab world still sees itself, and is seen by many observers, rightly or wrongly, as 'the ambitious heart and crossroads of Islam'.[15] The strong historical and intellectual symbiosis between the Arabic language and the Islamic message, and the manner in which this historical experience has shaped Arab cultural identity, find no parallel elsewhere among Muslim peoples.

Since long before the emergence of Islamism, Islam has been a primary component of Arab cultural identity. But Islam is not its only component and not all Arabs are Muslims. Indeed, Christian Arabs have since the classical period played and continue to play a significant role in Arab culture, intellectually and socio-economically. Nevertheless, Islam's role in the Arab national consciousness is paramount; and not surprisingly, it has provided terms of reference in the rhetoric of both ruling elites and political activists.

However, particularly since the late 1920s, the appeal of Islam as a political ideology has been gathering a different kind of momentum, with claims of universal relevance to modern times. The background to this can be seen in the thought of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century reformists, notably Afghani, 'Abduh and Rashid Rida.

Hasan al-Banna's founding of the Muslim Brethren (*al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun*) in Egypt (1928) marked an important phase in this development, especially since by the eve of the 1952 coup by the Free Officers, the *Ikhwan* had become the most organised popular political movement in Egypt. The strengthening of the secular pan-Arab nationalist, socialist and anti-imperialist agenda under Gamal Abdul Nasser, the persecution of the *Ikhwan*, the failure of Nasser's projects, the Arab defeat of 1967, and the increasing sense of cultural alienation among the youth, all contributed to the wave of militant Islamism since the 1970s.

Modern Arab ruling elites have often invoked Islam to bolster their political legitimacy. Ostensibly 'secularist' leaders (such as Nasser of Egypt and Habib Bourguiba of Tunisia), who during the 1950s and 1960s based much of their popularity on pan-Arab sentiment, appealed to religious sentiment and made use of religious symbols. Intellectuals across the political spectrum, including Christian Arabs (e.g. Michel 'Aflaq, co-founder of the pan-Arab

Ba'th Party in Syria in the 1940s), evoked Islamic themes to serve their purposes.

Arab rulers, continuing the legacy of old Ottoman or Khedival practice, have accorded Muslim religious scholars (*'ulama*) visibility and status, and spent lavishly on building grand mosques, while maintaining state control over traditional religious institutions. Even in Syria where the Ba'th secular party still rules, Hafiz al-Asad retained the traditional *'ulama* in the appointed National Assembly in 1971, spent millions on construction of new mosques, supported Islamic shari'a schools as well as Islamic charities, and increased the pay of mosque personnel (imams, preachers, etc.) from the Ministry of Religious Affairs.[16]

During the 1970s and until his assassination in 1981, Anwar Sadat played the dangerous game of encouraging and attempting to manipulate religious tendencies in Egypt in order to undo Nasser's socialist and pan-Arab legacy and to shore up his own legitimacy. When he eventually turned against the Islamists, detaining hundreds of their leaders (as well as some leftist opponents of the regime since 1977), he was assassinated (6 October 1981) by members of a splinter extremist movement known as the *Jihad* group. By then Sadat's external and internal policies, particularly his peace treaty with Israel, had jeopardised his political legitimacy at home in the eyes of most Egyptians, unlike his popularity in Israel and the West.[17]

The debate about 'applying the shari'a'

'Applying the shari'a' is one of the most familiar but illusive catch phrases in contemporary Islamic rhetoric, whether it is enunciated by ruling elites or Islamist activists. To this, one can add the often repeated claims that the Qur'an is the 'constitution' of the state (Sa'udi Arabia); and the amended constitutions of a number of Arab states to include an article that Islam is the 'main source' of legislation (e.g. Egypt under Sadat, 1971 and 1981). Calls to 'apply the shari'a' are often associated with the equally popular slogan, 'Islam is the Answer', chanted by Islamist demonstrators while holding copies of the Qur'an in their hands.

There is a critical historical background to the debates about the constitutional and legal place of 'Islam' and the shari'a in Arabic political discourse. The Arab states, particularly Egypt, the countries of the Fertile Crescent and the Maghrib, have inherited secularising trends under Western influences that had begun since the mid-nineteenth century. These included trends towards modernising legislation according to society's needs, and eventually incorporating material from Western codes of law into the constitutional and civil laws. By the early twentieth century, it had become generally accepted that while the principles of shari'a remain unchanged, social rules and civil aspects of the law could be changed or adapted to approximate Western models.

The first three-quarters of the twentieth century witnessed vigorous attempts at law reform in Arab countries by nationalist modernising

regimes.[18] Of particular importance is the work of a number of distinguished individual jurists such 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Sanhuri of Egypt and Mustafa al-Zarqa of Syria. Al-Sanhuri's leading role in the formulation of modern civil codes for several Arab states, including Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Jordan, reflect an acceptance of integrating shari'a rules with Western inspired laws.[19] Al-Zarqa's work is significant also through his contribution to demonstrating that modern practices such as insurance, including life insurance, are compatible with the principles of Islamic law.

His *General Introduction to Jurisprudence* (first published 1953, later reissued as part of *Islamic Jurispridence in its New Garb*), presents Islamic jurisprudence in a comparative perspective, benefiting from modern Western methods, with original insights into actual limitations and potential horizons of juristic thought and practice in the Arab world. By 'starting from the basic general principles (*usul wa-mabadi' 'amma*) and leaving the details (*furu'*) to fit within [these principles]', he is conscious that 'this is the opposite of our traditional books of Islamic jurisprudence, which went straight to details, with only elements of general principles scattered accordingly'.[20]

Al-Zarqa's enlightened approach was highly praised in a review written in 1953 by 'Abd al-Qadir 'Awda, then the most prominent lawyer among the leadership of the Egyptian Muslim Brethren. Another like-minded lawyer, 'Awda had pioneered the study of Islamic penal law in a comparative modern approach, before he was tried and executed in 1954. It is indicative of the drastically changing intellectual and political climate since the 1970s that such steps along the path of law reform have been virtually halted. Thus the admirable work of these modernising scholars of Islamic law has not been developed further.

A dichotomy between Islamic jurisprudence and civil law emerged and began to (re)assert itself in most Arab countries. The establishment of separate shari'a faculties within most modern Arab universities (particularly since the 1950s) has perpetuated this dichotomy at both the intellectual and practical juristic levels. The insistence on the use of the word shari'a, instead of *fiqh* (jurisprudence) in this context, has further promoted the rhetorical ambiguity in the contemporary Islamic discourse. Given the central role of *fiqh* as an innovating tool even in traditional Islamic societies, the dichotomy between students of Law (*Huquq/Qanun*) in the modern sense and students of shari'a has considerably weakened the modernising trends in the Arab world. It has also hindered the process of integration of Islam and modernity in Arab societies. In practical terms, it certainly deprived shari'a graduates of the benefits of the enlightened methodology, which versatile jurists of al-Sanhuri and al-Zarqa's generation had mastered, and passed on to their students.

The shari'a faculties and their graduates eventually moved towards promoting the traditional textual pedagogical approach associated with the old Azhar methods. This was despite the high calibre and open-mindedness of some of their professors, and the efforts during the Nasser era to transform al-Azhar into a modern university, by incorporating non-religious faculties

(science, medicine, economics and humanities, etc.) within it. The old methods had been criticised by Muhammad 'Abduh (1849–1905), himself an Azhari graduate and teacher, who tried in vain to bring about reforms. These same antiquated methods had been vividly portrayed and daringly criticised by Taha Husain, based on his experience at the Azhar in the early twentieth century, particularly in his autobiographical *Stream of Days*.[21]

As a highly regarded traditional Islamic teaching institution, Al-Azhar has played an increasing intellectual and educational role in Egypt and the Arab World (and the wider Islamic world), particularly since the early nineteenth century. With the end of the 'ghost' Ottoman caliphate, as a result of Atatürk's secularising measures, the Azhar's influence in Egyptian national life and politics took on a new turn. In a sense the Azhar establishment seems to have been impelled to play a role in the political sphere, especially as the Egyptian ruling elite felt the need of more religious legitimacy, with the dreams of a renewed Arab 'caliphate' that it aspired to represent.

The 1920s saw the success of the Azhar *'ulama* lobbying to include the phrase 'Islam is the religion of the state' in the Egyptian constitution of 1923–24, thus initiating a trend that was imitated by other Arab states in their constitutions. This was almost immediately used to strengthen the hold of al-Azhar as the official religious establishment in the country, enabling it to force the government of the day to curb secular tendencies, not only in legislation, but also in education and publishing, even in literature. For example, al-Azhar's self-appointed council of scholars persuaded the government to prosecute independent thinkers who dared to challenge traditional thinking, banning their books, whether they belonged to the rank of the religious *'ulama* ('Ali 'Abd al-Raziq's book on *Islam and the Principles of Governance*, Cairo, 1925) or were outside it (Taha Husain's *On pre-Islamic Poetry*, Cairo, 1926).

The Azhar *'ulama* also attempted with some success to impose their will on the curricula and students' dress and behaviour of the secular college *Dar al-'Ulum*, and to abort the work of the newly established Institute for the Training of Judges. These moves were part of a campaign to give the Azhar more 'moral' authority and therefore political clout. Things got even worse during the 1930s, not only because of Azhar *'ulama*, but more so because of the duplicity and corruption in the government, political parties and the tightening hold of British colonial rule, despite Egypt's nominal independence.[22] It was against such a background that the Muslim Brethren were formed and their power and influence gained momentum.

Secularism in Arab culture

With the increasing interest in recent Islamist activism in the name of religion, it is important not to ignore the strong secular tradition still surviving and active in contemporary Arab societies. The Canadian social philosopher, Charles Taylor, has reminded us that secularism – although having its origins in the

context of Christian Europe of 'early modern' times (i.e. after the 'Reformation' and the 'wars of religion' of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) – is nevertheless applicable to non-Christian societies as they modernised. Talal Asad further distinguishes between 'secular' as 'an epistemic' category, and 'secularism' as a 'political doctrine' which 'presupposes new concepts of "religion, ethics, politics" and new imperatives associated with them'.[23]

'Secularisation' may also be understood as a process by which the realms of 'politics' and 'religion' are differentiated in the life of a society. Is this applicable to Muslim societies, particularly those of the Arab world? Until the late 1970s, it might have seemed that, unlike pre-revolutionary Iran and Kemalist Turkey, the Arab world was peculiarly incapable of moving seriously towards secular goals. Thus while Reza Shah of Iran and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, for different reasons, held 'Islam' responsible for keeping their respective nations 'backward', in the first half of the twentieth century, no authoritarian or revolutionary 'secularising' Arab leader could have made such statements, even in the second half of the same century.

If 'secularisation' should be interpreted as 'filleting religion out of politics' – Atatürk style – does it have to lead to filleting religion out of society? We know that no modern Western country, no matter how intensely secular its politics might be, has attempted to achieve such an outcome. Indeed, if one considers that such an attempt was made in Eastern Europe, it has not prevented both Orthodox and Western Christianity, Protestant and Catholic from outliving the Communist regimes and contributing to their fall. Both Iran and Turkey, in their different ways, have experienced a resurgence of political Islam since the late 1970s. Meanwhile, despite the US attempts, or perhaps because of US and other Western interventions, any overt attempt to secularise Arab politics, Western style, now seems even remoter than ever, at least in the short term.

It is true, for instance, that Islamists in general view secularism (*'ilmaniyya*) as an alien notion with no relevance to the Islamic context, and indeed as anti-religious. But there are other currents of thought equally based on Islam promoting different political ideals. A number of Muslim thinkers, such as Hasan Hanafi of Cairo University, have argued that Islam itself is a 'secular religion' that is 'essentially based on human interests' whereby 'what Muslims consider as good is thus good in the sight of God'. Both he and Rachid Ghannouchi of Tunisia have advocated a human-oriented comprehension (*fahm maqasidi*) of the shari'a.[24]

The disproportionately high profile extremists give to religion makes it difficult to acknowledge even that rational and secular intellectual currents exist in the Arab world today. Thus it is all the more necessary to point to such currents, which are a continuation of earlier currents deeply embedded in the Arab Islamic historical heritage. And when discussing secularism as a political culture, it is necessary to pay attention to the secular humanistic tradition in Arab history before we make predictions about the incommensurability of secularism with the culture of the Arab world.

For the student of Arab Islamic intellectual history, it goes without saying that worldly – i.e. secular – outlooks and imperatives have manifested themselves in Arab Islamic culture throughout its long history. The Arabic Islamic tradition espoused a rationalist secular outlook in its classical heyday, accepting much of the Hellenistic scientific and philosophical heritage, contributing to its advancement, and passing it on to pre-Renaissance Europe.[25]

For the contemporary period, Edward Said has called attention in his work to 'The other Arab Muslims'.[26] Over the past three decades or so, there have been ongoing lively debates from secular perspectives in the Arab cultural space. These have ranged over some actual or apparent dynamic dualities, including 'Islam and Arab nationalism', 'Islam and secularism', 'religion and society', 'authenticity and modernity', in addition to debates about the place of the 'contemporary Islamic movements' themselves.[27] These debates reflect genuine concern on the part of Arab intellectuals – both Muslim and Christian – and find resonance in certain segments of Arab public opinion.

Leading Christian Arab intellectuals, starting from clear secular premises, whether liberal or socialist, whether in the Arab countries or the diaspora, have also highlighted their affiliation with Arab Islamic civilisation understood in this way.[28] The late Maronite scholar, Father Yoakim Moubarac, observes that: 'The Christianity of the [Arab] East seems closer to Muslims [than that of the West], by the fact of language and origins, and even by the factor of common interests'.[29] Both Christian and Muslim intellectuals in the Arab world usually share in the current debates about Arab Islamic history, the Arab present and the Arab future. They share in a sympathetic and filial outlook towards rationalist Islam and are both critical and apprehensive of Islamist extremists.

The secular aesthetics are also abundantly reflected in classical and modern Arabic literature, in poetry and prose. Georges Khudr has observed that 'there is perhaps no secular worldly poetry that can match Arabic poetry, including English and Russian poetry. The Arabs are secularists ('*ilmaniyyun*) in their culture and literature to a great extent'.[30] This is not a camouflaged call to secularise Islam, for Khudr speaks as a cultural insider with an added comparative perspective. Khudr is a distinguished Christian Arab cleric and intellectual (he is a Bishop of the Antiochean Orthodox Church) and a widely read writer. His point applies to early Islamic poetry as well as to poetry of the succeeding Islamic centuries, and to modern creative literature, popular poetry and folklore, including even that of central Arabia, the home of the fundamentalist Wahhabiyya movement. The distinguished French Arabist and sociologist, Jacques Berque, has demonstrated this most eloquently.[31]

One could still discover aesthetic worldly tendencies (perhaps even a resurgence of them?) if one looked carefully for them, even in the most unlikely places.[32] Such secular currents need to be restated against the common assumption about Arab Islamic culture as being dominated by the religious imperative in all areas of life. Secular aesthetic and cultural dimensions are largely ignored in modern studies dealing with Islam and secularism.[33]

Such debates, which have been going on in the Arab world since long before 11 September 2001, indicate an increasing awareness of the global environment and the imperatives of the ongoing interaction between 'Western' and Arab Islamic cultural perspectives. The catastrophic events of 11 September and their aftermath have further led to much soul-searching and re-orientation at different levels, particularly in countries such as Saudi Arabia. But these voices are not even half-acknowledged in the West, in comparison with the voices of religious extremists.

At the level of popular culture, I argue that the generations of the first three-quarters of the twentieth century, in much of the Arab world, were generally free from religious indoctrination and 'rabble-rousing' religious fanatics. While being observant Muslims, people were generally able to distinguish religious duties from secular social customs and obligations, and again from political aspirations and constraints. As Muslims, they believed in the prophetic maxim enjoining them to: 'work for this world as if you are going to live for ever, and work for the next world as if you are going to die tomorrow'.

Like most Arabs today, they were not insensible to the metaphorical aesthetics of such a saying. In the context of social occasions such as births, betrothals, weddings, visits, mourning for the dead, family conciliation, and the like, so-called Islamic normality does not appear as an intrusive element, possibly even less so than in traditional Catholic or Orthodox Christianity with its clerical hierarchy and the role of the clergy in rites of passage.

Above all, the conjunction 'and' between 'religion' and the 'world' (*din wa dunya*), or between 'religion' and 'the state' (*din wa dawla*) was, for those generations, more of a disconnective than a connective. Municipal and parliamentary elections (where such existed), agricultural and construction work, education and employment, and so on, were affairs belonging to this world. There were thus many worldly issues – besides the religious imperative – which motivated people in Arab societies. This is still true about most Arabs today. But because it is not news, it is never reported, particularly in a world media whose interest is served in the next possible ploy of 'Muslim terrorists'. To Hobsbawm's observation that 'fundamentalist religion is a major force for mass mobilisation', one could also add 'mass media'.[34]

We therefore need to consider factors far more complex than the pseudo-psychological or the simplistic 'clash of civilisations' theory, to understand the drastic changes of outlook that have taken place since the 1970s, and then to ask: Are these peculiar to Islamic societies and can they really be attributed to Islam? Or rather, to a configuration of socio-economic and political factors both internal and external, including recurring foreign intrusions and interventions?

Thus it is all the more disturbing for Muslim thinkers that a cultural tradition that has historically been open to a worldly, i.e. secular, outlook in its literary, scientific, intellectual and popular orientations should be now perceived as suffocating and contracting under the rhetoric of religious extremism. This has weighed heavily on the minds of many Arab intellectuals over the past three decades. They have expressed their criticism of what

they see as 'irrational' aspects in the Islamist current, including not only the slogans and militancy of extremists, but also the ideas of mainstream leading figures.[35]

Islamists versus secularists

The work of the distinguished Azharite scholar, Shaykh Dr Yusuf al-Qaradawi, illustrates the complexity of the questions involved in debates about Islam and secularism. He is an heir to the key doctrines of Hasan al-Banna's Muslim Brethren, and a leading figure in what has been called the mainstream/moderate (*wasatiyya*) Islamic trend in Egypt.[36] His *Islam and Secularism Face to Face* provides a scholastic discourse on what he sees as a basic dichotomy between 'Islam' and 'secularism'. His book was written expressly as a refutation of contemporary 'secularists' in Egypt, notably Fu'ad Zakariyya, a professor of Philosophy at Cairo University, with whom al-Qaradawi had heated public debates on this and related issues.[37]

In the conclusion of his book, al-Qaradawi offers a series of simple 'Yes to this, no to that' statements, reminiscent, in their tenor but not their intent, of the refrains of demonstrators anywhere on the modern global stage. Thus he intones:

> Yes to science, no to secularism; yes to the Islamic state, no to the religious state; yes to modernisation, no to westernisation; yes to intellectual interaction, no to intellectual invasion; yes to pride in religion, no to blind fanaticism; yes to constructive dialogue, no to destructive scepticism.[38]

Apart from al-Qaradawi's unequivocal rejection of religious fanaticism, I should like to highlight two further points. First, he welcomes intellectual interaction (*al-tafa'ul al-fikri*); and second, he is determined in his opposition to a religious state (*al-dawla al-diniyya*). The implication here is quite clear: since he is strongly supportive of an Islamic state, he perceives such a state not as equivalent to, or at least he sees it as different from, a 'religious state'. Al-Qaradawi is not a marginal figure on the Islamist landscape. In addition to being the author of many widely read publications, including a collection of contemporary juristic opinions (*Fatawa Mu'asira*) and a critique of Islamic extremism, he is the host of a popular show on the satellite television channel Al-Jazira. He has a broad following, particularly among Muslim youth, throughout the Arab World, and in other Muslim countries and the Islamic diaspora.

He is a leading example of those Islamists who, in his own words, 'would always look for common ground with their interlocutors' and who 'abhor any recourse to violence'. He appeals to the Qur'anic injunction to 'debate with them in the fairest way' (Qur 29: 46).[39] His work shows clearly that he takes secularism seriously as an opposing ideology with which Islamists will have always to contend.

The rhetoric of moderate Islamists, such as al-Qaradawi, appeals to 'mass piety' in a way that secularist rhetoric cannot match. Although sprinkled with appeals to science, reason and free open debate, the rhetoric of moderate Islamists relies primarily on a reservoir of familiar religious vocabulary that resonates with the wider Islamic public. While remaining in the realm of the general and referential, moderate (*wasatiyya*) Islamist advocates are bound to continue to win more popular support than secularists. This is a state of affairs that is acknowledged by both sides to the debate. It is a reality that can be gauged from the pages of Egyptian and other Arabic newspapers and magazines, and from the Arabic electronic media over the past two decades. As a rule, moderate Islamist leaders remain opposed to the extremists, and particularly to the unjustifiable violence that is perpetrated in the name of Islam and Muslims. This is not only evident in al-Qaradawi's own book, *The Islamic Awakening between Legitimate Difference and Objectionable Separatism* (Beirut, 1990), but also in many other activities attempting to steer the Islamic awakening into a more benign constructive path.[40]

Islamist discourse: between rhetoric and political realities

It is customary to think of everything coming out of the Arab world as either to do with Islamism or a reaction to it. Yet Islamism itself has been in part a response to secularising trends that have been viewed as a foreign importation. It has also been a response to perceived problems in Egypt, the Arab world and the wider Islamic world. In assessing the rhetorical as opposed to the political reality of Islamism in any Muslim country, it is useful to think in terms of the concept of interacting 'public spheres' and changing dynamics within which both the Islamist movements and the ruling elites have to operate.[41] And in so doing to consider not just the rhetoric of the Islamists but also how they have acted or lived by their rhetoric.

At the time of its foundation in 1928, the Muslim Brethren (*al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun*) was essentially a religious–social reform movement. Given its intended aim was to reform the Islamic community, it was inevitable that it should become involved in education and politics. Thus in every country where they have been active, especially Egypt, Sudan and Jordan, the Brethren have attempted, with some success, to gain control of national educational institutions and professional unions, e.g. ministries of national education, universities, students unions, professional syndicates, and so on.

Thus during the 1940s and early 1950s (until their suppression by Nasser in 1954), the Muslim Brethren in Egypt were proposing reforms in national education in accordance with Islamic teachings. Such reforms were otherwise being articulated somewhat earlier, but with a secular emphasis in secular terms by such leading figures as Lutfi al-Sayyid and Taha Husain, for example in the latter's *Future of Culture in Egypt* (1938). In fact, Husain had been a *bête noire* of the Brethren's cultural and educational polemics, not only because of

his work on education, but also for his impact on the introduction of a modern secular orientation in the study of Arabic literature, Arab culture and Islamic historiography.

Hasan al-Banna's *Epistles* are, on the whole, firmly situated in his own time and place, many of them addressed as 'open letters' to 'leaders of opinion and directors of the masses, and to all those who wish for the well being of the world and the happiness of humanity'.[42] He concerned himself with topical issues affecting Egypt, the Arab nation, and the wider Islamic world, among them the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936, which he opposed. On the question of Palestine, he stood firmly for Arab rights. He discussed Arab unity, Islamic unity, the Egyptian economy, educational policy, and constitutional, legal, administrative and educational reform in line with Islamic teachings and ethics.

The Brethren's rhetoric has been generally rich in allusions to Islamic principles, repeated assertions that 'Islam is a comprehensive way of life', constant reference to Islamic foundation texts, with numerous quotations from the Qur'an and Hadith, and references to idealised moments and achievements in Islamic history. But what was the relation of this rhetoric to the reality of their policies or achievements?

In a speech delivered in 1938 (the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the Brethren), Hasan al-Banna describes Islam as 'religion and state' (*din wa dawla*). This has become a key text for those emphasising the political dimension of Islam. The intention was to assert that Islam is concerned with both this world and the next. The expression '*Din wa dawla*' is one of five such pairs of attributes of Islam, listed by al-Banna.[43] Meanwhile, despite invoking the 'glorious caliphate' as the ideal institution of Islamic leadership, the Brethren, according to their founder, held that 'the Islamic system (al-nizam al-Islami) of government is not worried about forms and appellations, as long as the three bases for such a system are realised'. They are: the responsibility of the ruler, the unity of the nation, and respect for the nation's will.[44]

The Brethren's rhetorical parameters were to be extended to meet new realities, in the changing political circumstances during the 1940s and 1950s. With the outbreak of the Second World War, and increasing difficulties with the government because of their anti-British stance, the Brethren formed a secret para-military organisation. This complicated their relations with the authorities even further, leading eventually to violence, with both Egypt's Prime Minister and al-Banna himself being assassinated in 1949.

The Brethren's relationship with the Free Officers' Revolution, which succeeded in July 1952, illustrates their strength and influence at the time and their focus on education. But it also illustrates the pattern of problems inherent in collaboration between a utopian Islamic organisation and a military regime. The Free Officers included several Brethren sympathisers, and after their initial cooperation, the Brethren were eventually suppressed for their suspected involvement in an attempt to assassinate Nasser in 1954. Although many of the leading intellectuals, including Sayyid Qutb, were imprisoned,

and some were executed in 1955, not all the leadership was hostile to the new government, nor were they all treated in the same way by the Egyptian authorities. The new Supreme Guide of the Brethren, Hudaybi, and particularly 'Abd al-Rahman al-Banna, brother of the founder, were prepared to come to terms with Nasser's regime, and even to express some criticism of others of their colleagues.[45]

Other political circumstances were to have further impact on the activities of the movement. These include the banning and attempted suppression of the Egyptian Brethren under Nasser (1954–70), and the long incarceration, torture and sometimes execution of prominent leaders of the movement, notably Sayyid Qutb.

In Syria, the Muslim Brethren was founded in 1945 by Dr Mustafa al-Siba'i who had studied and lived in Egypt for over a decade (from 1933). The membership was mostly urban-based, participating in parliamentary elections first during the 1950s, with Siba'i winning a seat and being active in debates and legislation, until his defeat in 1957 by a Nasserite candidate. During the Nasser-led United Arab Republic (UAR) (1958–61), the Brethren was officially a banned organisation, even though their leader Dr. Siba'i won Nasser's approval with his book, *The Socialism of Islam* (*Ishtirakiyyat al-Islam*), which he wrote while teaching at the shari'a Faculty of Damascus University. In late 1961, after the dissolution of the UAR, the Syrian Muslim Brethren were able to win a few parliamentary seats, and even a cabinet post, during the post-union 'separatist' period.

With the Ba'th coup in 1963, the Muslim Brethren suffered greatly, especially when Hafiz al-Asad became president (1970–2002). The Brethren campaigned against him because he was an 'Alawite, a member of a minority religious sect many of them regarded as 'infidel'. In response, Asad highlighted his own 'Islamic' profile, introducing into the amended Constitution the article stating that 'the religion of the President of the Republic is Islam', while encouraging the formation of peasants' unions and the officially sponsored Peasants' Armed Detachments (in 1980) as a bulwark against the Muslim Brothers militants.[46] The killing of tens of cadets in Aleppo (mostly Alawites) and massacre of thousands in Hama in 1980, mostly members of the Brethren, signalled the height of confrontation between militant factions of the Brethren and the state's security forces. This brought a virtual halt of the Brethren's activities in Syria.[47]

In Jordan, the interaction of the Islamists in the public sphere is more dynamic. The Muslim Brethren of Jordan (established in the late 1940s) maintained a working, if fluctuating, political relationship with the monarch. They participated openly but not quite successfully in the parliamentary elections of 1956. By not being officially a political party, they were not affected by the 1957 ban. After the Jordanian Political Parties Law was ratified in 1993, they formed a distinct parliamentary party under the name of the Islamic Action Front (*Jabhat al-'Amal al-Islami*). The Islamist movement is the largest and best organised political movement in Jordan, making a

point of representing an inclusive identity of both Jordanians and Palestinians in the kingdom.[48] In its 'oppositional politics', the Islamic Action Front (*Jabhat al-'Amal al-Islami*) claimed half of the Palestinian MPs in the 1993 elections.

In their attempt to appear as agents of national cohesion they invoke the traditional Arab maxim: 'Anarchy (*fitna*) sleeps, woe unto who awakens it', but they also remain attentive to the compromises necessitated by the political landscape. So when the regime escalated its pressure on them for opposing the 1994 Jordan–Israel Peace Treaty and closer links with both Israel and the US, they joined with other opposition Deputies (including secularists, socialists and even communists) in providing 'detailed rational critiques' of the Treaty.[49] Again, while in 1997 the IAF boycotted the parliamentary elections, most of its members in the latest elections (2003) actually ran as 'independent' candidates. This reflected their reading of the mood of the electorate, which preferred known popular individuals with a track record of serving the people to the sweeping slogans to political parties.

In Egypt, although political parties are allowed, the Muslim Brethren have to this day remained illegal as a political organisation. In line with their own self-perception, they do not actually identify themselves as a party (*hizb*) as such. But they have been able and willing to field candidates during parliamentary elections, under the umbrellas of alliances with other parties, both right and left wing. They continue to display a broad spectrum of intellectual attitudes and political strategies. Some of their leaders view Islam as 'social justice' for the downtrodden, rather than the formal implementation of religious legal codes, or advocating the Islamic heritage in a revolutionary way. Despite their putative cosmic ideology of a utopian Islamic world community, many of the leaders of the Brethren are critical of Islamists who seek to establish a repressive system under the guise of divine sovereignty. In this respect, they are more in line with the idea of Rachid Ghannouchi, the leading Tunisian Islamist, quoted at the head of this chapter.

Other members of the Egyptian Brethren have argued that Islam is about defending the dispossessed, thus coming quite close to the Islamic leftist stance of Hasan Hanafi and the *wasatiyya* tendency. This seems to be so even when it comes to supporting the basically secular notions of citizenship and national integration and opposing the extreme ideas of the advocates of radical Islamism.

The dynamics and paradoxical circumstances affecting the fate of certain Islamist leaders and ideologues can be seen as both causes and effects of discernible inconsistencies between rhetoric and reality. The example of Sayyid Qutb (1906–66), a most influential leading figure in the Brethren movement in Egypt and beyond, is a case in point. Much has been written about his influence, and I only highlight those aspects of his life and ideas that fit into my general theme of rhetoric and reality in Islamist politics.[50] It is symptomatic of his role that Qutb should receive some overstated assessments and striking generalisations from Western observers, particularly generalist historians.

Thus Fernandez-Armesto describes Qutb as 'the spiritual progenitor of Muslim terrorism in Egypt'.[51] Anthony Black, a specialist in European political thought, is prepared to count Qutb 'among the most original thinkers of the twentieth century'; and sees Qutb's writings as 'a new approach to Islam'. Black ultimately considers him as 'anti-modernist in his denial of the need to learn anything from the West about society and politics, and of any equivalence between Islamic and western values'.[52] Several Muslim writers have accused Qutb of fomenting 'hatred and narrow mindedness', 'dissent and falsehood', 'leading people astray in the name of religion', and 'departing from our Arab Islamic thought'. To his followers he is a 'divine scholar' (*'alim rabbani*) and 'the great Imam, Jurist, Thinker and Martyr'.[53]

Sayyid Qutb, however, should be seen as an individual thinker, not always the official ideologue of the Muslim Brethren, even though he was a member (he joined in early 1952). Together with Pakistan's Mawdudi, by whose ideas he was influenced, Qutb has played a most important role in transforming Islamist ideology and activism, through both his writings and his stance in the face of adversity. It is important to appreciate his views from the perspective of his own personal experiences, particularly his long harsh imprisonment.

Above all, we should perhaps consider Qutb's transformation in response to complex personal, intellectual and political factors. From a modernist romantic poet, prolific and distinguished literary critic and active participant in Egypt's secular intellectual, cultural and political life (between 1935 and 1954), he turned into an exclusively committed Islamist ideologue and eventually a most militant radical. The author of the balanced, incisive *Literary Criticism: Its Principles and Methods* (1948), and the reasoned and scholarly *Aesthetic Portrayal in the Qur'an* (*al-Taswir al-Fanni fi al-Qur'an*) (1945), gave way to the fiery militant in *Signposts on the Way* (*Ma'alim fi al-Tariq*) (1964).

Two factors may explain this transformation: his sojourn in the United States to gain experience of the American education system (December 1948 to August 1950); and his long and painful imprisonment (1955–64; then 1965–66). But one should not ignore the sense of continuity in his deep cultural, social and political concerns. It was in the US that he apparently decided to turn away from literary criticism and to devote 'the rest of my life and effort to a comprehensive social programme, which would take up the life spans of many'.[54] It was mostly in prison that he wrote his most influential works on militant Islamism. These were his commentary on the Qur'an – *In the Shades of the Qur'an* (*Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*), and the explosive *Signposts*. (He had begun his commentary on the Qur'an in serialised form in early 1952.) Both have gone through numerous editions and are globally disseminated and widely read. In his *Signposts*, he describes himself as one who has 'returned to the sources of his faith' after spending 'forty years of reading in most fields of human knowledge', adding that in that period he had 'known the true nature of *Jahiliyya*'.[55] His advocacy of reading the Qur'an and relating to it aesthetically as if it were poetry and of 're-living the spiritual experiences' of the early Muslims who first tasted 'the sweetness of the

Qur'an in its freshness', echoes an idea already hinted at in one of the epistles of Hasan al-Banna.

It is no exaggeration to say that Qutb was in a sense 'on fire with the Qur'an'.[56] Perhaps one could add that this intimacy with the Muslim scripture was both poetical and intellectual and that Qutb was also on fire with his own rhetoric and eloquence. His *Signposts* should be seen – together with his Qur'anic commentary – in the context of his tendency to use a mixture of metaphors and other rhetorical devices. His *Signposts* is made up partly of lengthy quotations from his great commentary on the Qur'an, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*. The pages are thus literally taken out of context; add to this that the little *Signposts* tract itself is so often quoted out of its own context by some splinter extremist groups, one can imagine the process of extreme radicalisation at work.[57]

It is not just his negative experience in the US, or a pre-conceived 'Islamic' polemical attitude towards the West, that informs Qutb's critique of Western moral values. As Youssef Choueiri has pointed out, 'elements of the West's self-critique' seem to have 'significantly influenced Islamic fundamentalism through Qutb's reading (while in prison, after 1954) of Alexis Carrel, *L'homme, cet inconnu* (1935). Carrel is said to have outlined 'the demoralising effects of material progress', and identified the need for 'a new ascetic and mystical elite to rescue humankind from the degrading effects of democracy'. Qutb apparently 'felt as if all the pieces of the puzzle had begun to fall into place'.[58] The theme of the decline of the West and Islam's opportunity to step in and lead the world in the next historical phase has been raised in the writings of other Islamist advocates, such as Abul Hasan Nadvi, Abu al-A'la Mawdudi, and to a certain extent Hasan al-Banna.

It should be noted that, despite his early contribution to 'secular' literary criticism, Qutb's dismissal of the work of classical Muslim philosophers, such as al-Farabi (d. AD 950) and Averroes (d. AD 1198), is no less significant than his negative attitude to Western systems of thought. It is clear that Qutb not only rejected what the West stood for, but also went through a process of gradual rejection of much of the rationalist and humanist dimensions of his own Arab Islamic heritage.

Because of the variety of Qutb's output, between his pre-radicalisation and post-radicalisation phases, his influence has been correspondingly varied. Many Muslim intellectuals still admire Qutb's reasoned arguments in his *Social Justice in Islam* (completed in 1949). Hasan Hanafi, himself a former member of the Brethren and a self-confessed advocate of the Islamic Left (*al-Yasar al-Islami*), has argued that Qutb could have developed into a great rationalist, and 'leftist', had it not been for his terrible experiences in prison.[59] Most of mainstream Brethren probably prefer to focus on constructive aspects of Qutb's writings, and would not subscribe to the violence-inspiring interpretations of the splinter groups. On the other hand, his writings have become essential reading among most Islamists. Even more than Mawdudi, who seems to have first coined the term *hakimiyya* (God's sovereignty), Qutb

has articulated this concept together with *jahiliyya* (the state of ignorance and arrogance associated with defying the truth of religion). In this respect, Qutb has perhaps contributed greatly to strengthening the rhetoric of dualistic confrontational opposition: God and Satan, Good and Evil, Islam and the West. But we need to realise that such a stance is not unique to Qutb, or to Islamists in general. As Tariq Ali has argued, and as we occasionally see in the media, we are witnessing a time of clashes of fundamentalisms. It is thus misleading to describe Qutb simply as anti-Western, or even 'anti-modernist', without the above qualifications and the indigenous context of his polemics.

Eventually, it was mainly as a result of these and other similarly trying experiences in Egypt and Syria (and under different but equally humiliating circumstances elsewhere, such as the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Lebanon, Algeria, and for that matter Afghanistan) that we came to have increasingly extremist and violent Islamist groups.

Conclusion

To understand how and why certain anti-rational tendencies have gained ground in the Arab world, we need to consider their historical and socio-political context, including the official state policies, notably the attempt to crush major mainstream Islamist movements such as the Muslim Brethren in Egypt, and the cancellation of Algeria's elections. To this should be added the manipulation of religion by ruling elites and opposition movements alike. In the cultural sphere, the narrow educational curricula of certain Islamic schools, including the traditional religious faculty of al-Azhar in Cairo, and the tendency to impose narrow moral censorship in the name of Islam have seriously stifled intellectual and cultural life. Concerned Muslim intellectuals (and some political figures) are warning against the antiquated even if well-meaning preaching and teaching in certain mosques and colleges, in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere. The even narrower perspective of the old style *madrasas* of Pakistan should not be ignored. For apart from producing the Taliban, they have spawned the vast global network of *Tabligh* and *Da'wa* (Preaching and Mission), which has been generally underestimated. Its influence in the Arab countries since the 1970s has reached as far west as Morocco, and extended to the Islamic diasporas in Western countries.

The so-called 'resurgence of Islam' in the political life of the Arab world (and other Muslim countries) can be only appreciated against the background of specific historical junctures and socio-economic and political circumstances. These have included a heightened sense of cultural and intellectual alienation. Contributing factors to this alienation are the impact of Westernisation, the failure of the modernisation and development projects under the post-independence nationalist ruling elites, and the ideological poverty of most secular political parties in the Arab world.

Finally, it should be possible to have different versions of modernity in our world. The familiar paradigms of a 'clash of civilisations', *hakimiyya* versus

jahiliyya, and 'Islam versus the West', need to be exposed as sterile and destructive, in both intellectual and socio-political terms. Ways of creative convergence between modernity and Islam need to be explored within a context of common humanity, taking into consideration that large parts of the world's population are neither Muslim nor Western.

Notes

1 Ridwan al-Sayyid, Lebanon, 1986 (Editor of *al-Ijtihad* periodical), Beirut.
2 Rachid Al-Ghannouchi, Leader of the Tunisian [Islamic] Renaissance Party, 2000.
3 S. Ibrahim *et al.* (1988), p. 329.
4 Hobsbawm (1994), p. 203.
5 Siegel (1986), p. xiv.
6 For such approaches, see Marty and Appleby (1995–2000); Bruce (2003); Black (2001).
7 Fernandez-Armesto (1995), p. 555.
8 Braudel (1994), p. 93.
9 Fukuyama (1992), pp. 235–6.
10 Shboul (1995), pp. 29–68; Ayubi (1991).
11 An example is the work by Shaykh Y. al-Qaradawi (1990a).
12 Representatives of such groups prefer to use the appellations *tayyar*, *haraka* and *jama'a* in the singular, while critical writers as well as opponents use them in the plural, see for example, H. Hanafi, *al-Usuliyya al-Islamiyya* (Islamic Fundamentalism), vol. 6 of his *al-Din wal-Thawra fi Misr* (Religion and Revolution in Egypt 1952–1981), (1989); see also Ghannouchi (1993); Ayubi (1991)*,* especially pp. 67–9, for '*usuliyyun*', p. 68; in the context of Iran and Twelver Shi'ism in general, *usuli* denotes an intellectual current within the Ja'fari school of jurisprudence, characterised by insisting on the legitimacy of reason in interpreting Islamic basic sources and principles (*usul*); Ayatullah Khomeini was a representative, among others, of such a current, see Enayat (1982), especially pp. 161–9.
13 Huntington (1997), see chapters 6 and 7 and also pp. 174–82; B. Lewis (1990); see further, Said (2001), p. 572.
14 As done, for example, by V. S. Naipaul in his *Among the Believers* (1981).
15 Braudel (1994), p. 95; see also Hanafi (1988–89) vol. 6 p. 89.
16 Batatu (1999), p. 260.
17 See Heikal (1983); and Hanafi (1988–89), vol. 6, pp. 94–109.
18 See Anderson (1976).
19 Ibid. pp. 83–4 and 95–7.
20 Al-Zarqa (1998), pp. 16–17.
21 Husain (1964).
22 For a contemporary testimony, see T. Husain's series of articles under the theme of *Bayna al-'Ilm wal-Din* (Between Knowledge and Religion), originally published in the Cairo press between 1923 and 1930; reprinted in his *Min Ba'id* (From Afar) (1982), pp. 205–54.
23 Taylor (1998); Asad (2003), 'Introduction'.
24 Hanafi (1988–89), vol. 6, p. 304; see also Ghannouchi, (1993), pp. 287, 315–16.
25 For classical Arab Islamic humanism see for example, Pellat (1953); Arkoun (1982); Shboul (1979); Watt (1968).
26 Said (1994), pp. 384–411.
27 See further Shboul (1995).
28 The list would be endless: prominent names would include Faris al-Khuri, Syrian prime minister in the 1940s, Makram Obied, the Egyptian nationalist leader who described himself as 'Christian by faith, Muslim by homeland', prominent historians such as Philip Hitti, Asad Rustum, Nabih Amin Faris, Constantine Zurayk, Albert and George Hourani, George Makdisi, Irfan Shahid, George Saliba; and other Christian Arab intellectuals, such

as Amin Rihani, Edward Said, Anwar Abdel Malik, Samir Amin, Ghali Shukri, Halim Barakat, and Nasif Nassar, etc.

29 Moubarac (1975), p. 93.

30 Georges Khudr is a Lebanese Bishop of the Antioch Orthodox Church; his remarks appeared in *al-Shuruq* newspaper, published in Sharjah, UAE, 27 January 1994 (cited in *'Ayn al-Naqid*), London & Beirut: Riad El-Rayyes Books, 1997, p. 332).

31 See in particular, Berque (1978); for the modern period, see also Jayyusi (1988).

32 For example, over the past two years or so, *al-Hajj* magazine, an official publication of the Saudi Government Department of Pilgrimage, has regularly featured cogent and highly relevant literary and artistic articles of general interest (even with occasional humorous cartoons!).

33 This is true of even such meritorious recent studies as al-Azmeh (1992), and Esposito and Tamimi (2000).

34 Hobsbawm (1994), p. 203.

35 Hanafi (1988–89), vols 5 and 6 (cited above). See also Daher (1992), pp. 40–101.

36 On *wasatiyya*, see Baker (2003), especially Chapter 6.

37 Al-Qaradawi (1990b), Prologue, pp. 7–14.

38 Al-Qaradawi (1990b), Epilogue, p. 239.

39 Al-Qaradawi (1990b), p. 8.

40 See for example, Baker (2003); and Hanafi (1988–89), both cited above.

41 Jürgen Habermas's concept of 'public spheres' has been imaginatively used by Marc Lynch in his empirical study of politics in an Arab country (Jordan): see Lynch (1999).

42 Al-Banna (1990) (authorised edition), p. 210.

43 Ibid. p. 171: 'for Islam is faith and worship, native land and nationality, religion and state, spirituality and work, a Book and a sword'.

44 Ibid. 'Our problems at home [i.e. Egypt's problems] in the light of the Islamic System', pp. 231–51; it is less accurate to translate '*nizam*' here as 'order', as is sometimes done.

45 Mitchell (1969); see also Jansen (1980), p. 80, n. 24.

46 Batatu (1999), pp. 251–5.

47 Ibid. see especially chapter 22, pp. 260–78.

48 Lynch (1999), p. 112.

49 Ibid. p. 193.

50 Among the plethora of works on Qutb, see Carré (1984); Haddad (1983), pp. 14–29, and other contributions by Haddad; Mousalli (1992); Diyab (1988).

51 Fernandez-Armesto (1995), p. 572.

52 Black (2001), p. 321.

53 Even Hasan Hanafi, in his critical analysis of Qutb's contribution is still sympathetic, see his *al-Din wal-Thawra* (1988–89), vol. 5, 167–300, where he refers to Qutb as '*al-Imam al-Shahid*'; see for other views, Diyab (1988), pp. 5–6 and passim.

54 According to a personal letter from Qutb to his friend, the literary critic Anwar al-Ma'addawi, quoted by Diyab, ibid. p. 98.

55 See his *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq*, Beirut, n.d., p. 156.

56 As A. Johns once observed in a personal conversation. See Johns (1990), pp. 143–70.

57 See also Shboul (2004).

58 Choueiri (1997), pp. 149–55; Black (2001), p. 321.

59 Hanafi (1988–89), vol. 5, pp. 289–98.

References

Arkoun, M. (1982) *L'Humanisme arabe au IV siècle de l'Hegire*. Paris: Vrin, 2e éd.

Anderson, N. (1976) *Law Reform in the Muslim World*. London: Athlone Press.

Asad, T. (2003) *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Ayubi, N. (1991) *Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Arab World*. London and New York: Routledge.

al-Azmeh, A. (1992) *Al-'Ilmaniyya min Manzur Mukhtalif* (Secularism from a Different Perspective). Beirut: Centre for Arab Unity Studies.

Baker, R. (2003) *Islam Without Fear: Egypt and the New Islamists*. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press.

al-Banna, H. (1990) *Majmu'at Rasa'il al-Imam al-Shahid Hasan al-Banna* (Collected Epistles). Alexandria: al-Muhammadiyya.

Batatu, H. (1999) *Syria's Peasantry, the Descendents of Its Lesser Rural Notables, and Their Politics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Berque, J. (1978) *Cultural Expressions in Arab Society Today*, R. W. Stookey (trans), Austin, University of Texas Press.

Black, A. (2001) *The History of Islamic Political Thought from the Prophet to the Present*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Braudel, F. (1994) *History of Civilizations*, Mayne, R. (trans), London: Allen Lane.

Bruce, S. (2003) *Politics and Religion*. Oxford: Polity Press.

Carré, O. (1984) *Mystique et Politique: Lecture révolutionaire du Coran par Sayyid Qutb, Frère musulman radical*. Paris: Cerf.

Choueiri, Y. (1997) *Islamic Fundamentalism*. London: Pinter.

Daher, 'A. (1992) 'al-La-Ma'qul fi al-Harakat al-Islamiyya al-Mu'asira' (The irrational in the contemporary Islamic movements), in *Mawaqif*, vol. 67, pp. 40–101.

Diyab, M. (1988) *Sayyid Qutb: al-Khitab wal-Idiyulujiyya* (Sayyid Qutb: Discourse and Ideology). Beirut, Dar al-Tali'a.

Enayat, H. (1982) *Modern Islamic Political Thought*. London: Macmillan.

Esposito, J. and Tamimi, A. (eds) (2000) *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East*. London: Hurst.

Fernandez-Armesto, F. (1995) *Millennium*. London: Bantam.

Fukuyama, F. (1992) *The End of History and the Last Man*. London: Penguin.

Ghannouchi, R. (1993) *al-Hurriyyat al-'Amma fi al-Dawla al-Islamiyya* (Public Liberties in the Islamic State). Beirut: Centre for Arab Unity Studies.

Haddad, Y. (1983) 'The Quranic justification for an Islamic revolution: The View of Sayyid Qutb', *The Middle East Journal*, vol. 73, pp. 14–29.

Hanafi, H. (1988–89) *al-Din wal-Thawra fi Misr* (Religion and Revolution in Egypt 1952–1981). Cairo: Madbuli, 8 vols.

Heikal, M. (1983) *Autumn of Fury: The Assassination of Sadat*. London: André Deutsch.

Hobsbawm, E. (1994) *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914–1991*. London: Michael Joseph.

Huntington, S. (1997) *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. London: Schuster.

Husain, T. (1964) *Al-Ayyam* (Stream of Days). Cairo: Ma'arif.

—— (1982) *Min Ba'id* (From Afar). Cairo: Ma'arif, 1938; (9th reprint, Beirut: Dar al-'Ilm lil-Malayin).

Ibrahim, S. (1988) *et al., al-Mujtama' wal-Dawla fi al-Watan al-'Arabi* (Society and State in the Arab World). Beirut: Centre for Arab Unity Studies.

Jansen, J. (1980) *The Interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt*. Leiden: Brill.

Jayyusi, S. (ed.) (1988) *The Literature of Modern Arabia: An Anthology*, London: Keagan Paul International.

Johns, A. (1990) 'Let My People Go! Sayyid Qutb and the Vocation of Moses', *Islam & Christian Muslim Relations*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 143–70.

Lewis, B. (1990) 'The Roots of Muslim Rage', *The Atlantic Monthly*, September.

Lynch, M. (1999) *State Interests and Public Spheres: the International Politics of Jordan's Identity*. New York, Columbia University Press.

Marty, M. and Appleby, R. (eds) (1995–2000), *The Fundamentalisms Project*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 5 vols.

Mitchell, R. (1969) *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Moubarac, Y. (1975) *al-Islam* (Islam: a brief introduction). Beirut: al-Nadwa al-Lubnaniyya.

Mousalli, A. (1992) *Radical Islamic Fundamentalism: The Ideological and Political Discourse of Sayyid Qutb*. Beirut: American University of Beirut.

Naipaul, V. S. (1981) *Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey*. New York: Knopf.

Al-Naquid (1997) *'Ayn al-Naquid*. London and Beirut: Riad El-Rayyes.

Pellat, C. (1953) *Le milieu basrien et la formation du Gahiz*. Paris: Maisonneuve.

al-Qaradawi, Y. (1990a) *al-Sahwa al-Islamiyya Bayna al-Ikhtilaf al-Mashru' wal-Ikhtilaf al-Madhmum* (The Islamic Awakening between Legitimate Difference and Objectionable Separatism). Beirut: al-Risala.

—— (1990b) *Al-Islam wal-'Ilmaniyya Wajhan li Wajh* (Islam and Secularism Face to Face). Second edition, Beirut: al-Risala.

Said, E. (2001) 'The Clash of Definitions', in *Reflections on Exile and Other Literary and Cultural Essays*. London: Granta.

—— (1994) 'The Other Arab Muslims', in *The Politics of Dispossession*. London, Chatto & Windus, pp. 384–411.

Siegel, P. (1986) *The Meek and the Militant: Religion and Power Across the World*. London and New Jersey: Zed Books.

Shboul, A. (2004) 'Islam and Globalisation: Arab World Perspectives', in *Islamic Perspectives on the New Millennium*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, pp. 43–73.

—— (1995) 'Islamic Radicalism in the Arab World', in Saikal, A. and Jukes, G. (eds), *The Middle East: Prospects for Settlement and Stability?* Canberra: The Australian National University, pp. 29–68.

—— (1979) *Al-Mas'udi and His World: a Muslim Humanist and His Interest in Non-Muslims*. London: Ithaca Press.

Taylor, C. (1998) 'The Modes of Secularism', in Bhargava, R. (ed.), *Secularism and its Critics*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Watt, W. (1968) *The Influence of Islam on Medieval Europe*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

al-Zarqa, M. (1998) *al-Fiqh al-Islami fi Thawbihi al-Jadid* (Islamic Jurisprudence in its New Garb), revised edn. Damascus: al-Risala.

Index